

# ARENA

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## *The U.S.A.* THREAT *to* BRITISH CULTURE

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# ARENA



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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
NOTE	2
The American Threat to British Culture	<i>Sam Aaronovitch</i> 3
Our Historical Tradition	<i>Diana Sinnot</i> 23
William Morris and the Moral Issues To-day	<i>E. P. Thompson</i> 25
The Trade Unions	<i>Wal Hannington</i> 31
Science	<i>J. L. Fyfe</i> 34
Agriculture	<i>A. Jordan</i> 35
Literature	<i>Montagu Slater</i> 37
Publishing	<i>Jack Lindsay</i> 39
The Newspapers	<i>Rose Grant</i> 41
Children's Reading	<i>Peter Mauger</i> 45
Films	<i>Ralph Bond</i> 48
I Take My Stand	<i>W. E. B. Du Bois</i> 50
A Turning Point	<i>Howard Fast</i> 55

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### NOTE:

THIS entire issue of *Arena* is devoted to the American threat to British culture, to all that is good and vital in our national tradition. Needless to say, as will be clear from the contributions, the threat comes from the reactionary elements now dominant in U.S.A. society, and there is no question of an attack on American culture as such. The elements in the U.S.A. which threaten our tradition are at the same time destroying the best traditions of American society, all that is freely and truly based in the life of the American people. It is only by this inner destruction and distortion of its own culture that the evil thing here analysed can develop the twisted forms for export. All blows struck here in Britain or elsewhere against the synthetic imperialist culture of the States, coldly and cynically devised for the debasement of man, is also a blow in defence of the U.S.A. common man, his menaced present and his future aspirations.

The contributions consist of the Report and contributions made at the Conference held at the Holborn Hall on 29th April, under the auspices of the National Cultural Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain. This Conference was such a success and raised such important problems that it was decided to commemorate it by devoting a whole issue of *Arena* to its work.

It was impossible to include Derek Kartun's contribution, with its tribute to the part played by progressive American intellectuals, through his absence from the country. However, we print the noble statement by Dr. Du Bois, one of the most honoured names in the culture of the States, a man of 83 years, whose selfless work for his people could be attacked by no one, not even the most malevolent and mean-hearted. However, having made the printed statement of his position on peace, he has been indicted as a 'foreign agent', handcuffed and manhandled like a criminal, and awaits trial.

To this stirring statement of his, we add a comment written for *Arena* by Howard Fast, an equally staunch fighter for the true American way.

# THE AMERICAN THREAT TO BRITISH CULTURE

THERE is a point I should like to make at the outset.

There are two ways of life, two cultures in the United States. The one is that which represents the struggle of the American people, the America of Emerson and Whitman, Theodore Dreiser, Paul Robeson and Howard Fast. *This America* does not seek to impose its way of life on other people. With the representatives of this progressive culture we desire greater friendship and co-operation.

The other way of life is that of the real rulers of America, the sixty families: the Fords, Morgans, du Ponts and Rockefellers. It is these people who attempt to impose their way of life on other countries and who therefore threaten British culture. All who love Britain need to combine against this threat.

## 1. THE 'WAY OF LIFE' OF AMERICAN BIG BUSINESS AND WHAT HAS GIVEN RISE TO IT.

The centre of world imperialism has shifted, especially since the first world war, from Britain to the United States of America. American productive capacity is sixty-seventy per cent. of the entire capitalist world.

The control of this vast productive machine is in the hands of sixty families. One giant trust alone, General Motors, made profits in 1950 equal to three times the capital of such a concern as I.C.I.

American imperialism seeks to expand since only by expansion can the new capital accumulated find profitable investment, new peoples be found to exploit, and the goods produced find profitable markets. From this has come the vision of an 'American century', not the century of the common man but a world ruled by the American trusts.

Whereas American strength has grown enormously, the capitalist world in which it has grown has lost control of eight hundred million people, within thirty-three years; has lost, that is to say, almost half the population of the world who now live under Socialism or are advancing to Socialism. The appetite and capacity of the American trusts has grown; that on which it feeds has shrunk.

Greedy to extend their exploitation, the American imperialists have decided to break down the barriers in their way. The subordination of the rest of the capitalist powers and their Empires is part of their plan for world domination, a plan which involves the launching of a third world war against the Soviet Union, China and the People's Democracies. The American trusts aim to destroy therefore, the national independence of *all* peoples, British as well as Soviet.

War which appals the common people makes the monopolies rejoice. The American trusts cannot deny that two world wars have nourished them and made them fat, even if some fifty million people were destroyed and whole countries devastated. To-day, preparations for a third world war are leading to profits hitherto unknown in American history and averting for a time the threat of overproduction that faced them in 1949. It is peace, as their own spokesmen cynically admit, which threatens them. William Morris, the great English Socialist, said plainly: 'War is the life-breath of the profit makers.'

The so-called American 'way of life' reflects the outlook of the sixty families and their paid politicians who are conducting this drive for war and for the American century.

What is its essence?

It is a glorification of the almighty dollar and of so-called private enterprise. It is an incitement to racialism and hatred of national minorities. It daily worships violence, brutality and gangsterism.

Consider these features in a little more detail.

The victory of the industrial capitalist north over the agricultural slave-owning south in the Civil War, led to a most rapid development of giant monopolies such as Rockefellers and Morgans who established their grip over the whole country. And with it they also established over the whole country the outlook peculiar to capitalism—that of cash—the dollar—as the only proper and respected link between man and man.

But in America it was an outlook untrammeled by a feudal past, completely undisguised. How Dickens castigated this outlook even before the Civil War, in his great novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*! When describing Martin Chuzzlewit's visit to the United States, Dickens wrote:

'All their cares, hopes, joys, affections, virtues and associations, seemed to be melted down into dollars. Men were weighed by their dollars, measures gauged by their dollars; life was auctioneered, appraised, put up and knocked down for its dollars.... Make commerce one huge lie and mighty theft.... Do anything for dollars!'

It is in this tradition that eighty years later the President of Bethlehem Steel said: 'Patriotism is a beautiful sentiment but it must not be allowed to interfere with our duties to our stock-holders.'

This unlimited rule of the dollar is, therefore, my first point.

It is its close combination with racialism which gives rise to a second distinctive feature.

The victory over the south, though it freed the slaves, did not liberate the Negroes. Their slave status has been largely turned into wage-labour; but their national oppression has been continued by the American monopolies; and with it they have taken over the slave-owning and racialist outlook and combined it with their own.

The connection of monopoly capitalism and national oppression is typical of all imperialist powers. It is inherent in imperialism. But

America not only oppresses nations outside her territory she also oppresses one of fifteen millions within her state boundaries. To maintain this national oppression and to prevent the alliance of Negro peoples and white workers, it is necessary for the trusts to indoctrinate the entire population with a hatred of Negroes and with feelings of white-superiority. And because this colonial oppression is in one's own home, so to speak, racialism is given an edge it has not known even in imperialist Britain and France, comparable only to Hitlerism or Malanite South Africa.

This very racialism is a war weapon being employed at this moment in Korea. It helps to corrupt young Americans for a war against the peoples of Asia. From 'nigger' to 'gook', from lynching in the American south to the bestial murder and rape of the Korean people, is only a step. It should sober us to think how short the step is from 'gook' to 'limey'.

This taking over of racialism is then a second feature of the American 'way of life'.

The third feature is the cult of violence.

The American trusts, desperate to expand in a shrinking capitalist world, have fostered an unprecedented growth of the worship of violence and brutality; since they see only a violent 'solution' to their problems. The basis for this gun-worship had already been well laid in the earlier period of American capitalism, with its stormy aggressive development. American politicians cannot think beyond 'situations of strength' as the content of diplomacy. Violence against the Negroes. Violence and gangsterism against militant trade unions. Thuggery and brutality in films, comics and literature. Politics and gangsterism, as the recent exposures showed, are now so mixed that it is hard in the States to say who is politician or who is gangster.

Year by year the amount of violence and crime increases in the United States. Only three weeks ago, Hoover of the F.B.I. announced that:

'Every eighteen seconds last year someone committed a major crime in the United States. Every five minutes someone was feloniously assaulted or killed.' (N.Y.H.T., 12.4.51.)

Certainly these tendencies to violence existed before the Second World War—but they are now so exaggerated that we may well ask ourselves if they have not reached a qualitatively new stage. And this would follow logically from the fact that to-day the American trusts have for the first time set themselves the aim of world domination.

We see this new stage expressed in the fantastic abasement before the destructive powers of the atom and hydrogen bombs which never cease to delight and thrill not simply the American press but the highest members of the U.S. Government.

Is it not horrifying that General Eisenhower, when asked if he would use the Atom Bomb, said: 'If I thought the net gain was on my side I would use it instantly.' He, in effect, confessed in the same speech that the only morality that would restrain him using the

bomb were not any moral feelings that he had himself, but the moral feelings of other people. This at once destroys the American pretence to stand for the dignity of the individual and for the highest moral values.

These are some features of the morality of American imperialism.

It is an outlook profoundly anti-human, contemptuous of the people, preaching the doctrine of the superman.

All the more sickening then is the unashamed demagogery of the American trusts in which they claim to be the saviours of world civilization; to be liberty's strong arm men.

The trusts have already made enormous efforts to impregnate their own people with their 'way of life'. They created an advertising and selling technique which Goebbels on his own statement found necessary to borrow in 1932.

But it must also be sold abroad. How otherwise are the British, French and other peoples to be persuaded to fight for the American trusts or watch and not resist their national independence being taken from them?

The export of films and comics, for instance, produced by giant industries, no longer becomes simply a matter of increasing the profits of those who produce them; they become in addition valuable means of converting other peoples to the ideas of American big business, creating the illusions of American world leadership, in Stalin's words 'enmeshing their minds in lies'.

The more their war plans develop, the harder they press their outlook upon us, caring nothing if it destroys our own national culture.

This process has gone further than most of us realize.

## 2. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE OUTLOOK OF THE AMERICAN TRUSTS HAS INVADED BRITAIN.

I intend to illustrate this invasion of our country firstly in the taking over of British markets by American films, books, dance-music, etc.; secondly in the penetration of American ideas into British culture and institutions.

*The taking over of British markets by American films, books, dance-music, etc.*

The most striking example is certainly that of the film industry. Many millions of people go each week to the films. The total box office takings exceed £100 millions a year. But the film-goer is lucky if one out of every five films that he sees is British.

In Britain, an independent British film industry barely struggles for existence. 'Over half the artists, technicians and craftsmen who could be making films are idle; over half the studio space is empty, and the annual output of British films is one-third of production figures in peak years.' (*Statement of Film Industry Employees' Council*.)

Who has destroyed the British film industry? The Americans, by dumping their products on the British market, undercutting British films. Between February and December, 1950, of all entertainment

films reviewed by the Bulletin of the British Film Institute, 306 were American, 64 British and 45 from other countries.

Each year seventeen million dollars are drained away from Britain to America as payment for their films. Under American orders, the British Government has steadily reduced the quota for British films from forty-five per cent. to thirty per cent., and even that is being violated.

American interests hold a commanding position in the distribution and exhibition of films in Britain. Warner Bros., for instance, has substantial financial interests in A.B.C.; 20th Century Fox, similarly in Gaumont-British; United Artists have some financial interest in Odeon. The position of the Americans in this field is more powerful than in any other country of Europe, except Spain, Western Germany and Austria.

Of the four principal newsreel companies in Britain, two are under American control (Paramount and British Movietone), and express, in British guise, an American point of view.

Under the Anglo-American Film Agreement, the Americans are able to use those dollars which they cannot yet withdraw from this country (said to be another seventeen million dollars) to buy up British film studios and make American films in Britain.

If this were not bad enough, British film makers have begun to make films, not for us but for the American market.

What are the contents of the Hollywood products? Perhaps seventy per cent. are preoccupied with crime or sex. Almost all are pervaded with violence. This is a trend which is being followed by the few British films being made, as we see with *The Blue Lamp*.

Here is an American film-critic on this trend to violence:

'To-day's movie villains, many of whom are "cop-killers", are fiends capable of killing a helpless babe in a cradle. In *Kiss of Death*, for example, Richard Widmark, a maniacal killer, hurls a crippled old lady in a wheelchair down several flights of steps to a horrible death. In *Criss Cross*, Burt Lancaster is shown in a hospital bed. His arm in a plaster cast is raised and held in place with a strong cord. During the early hours of the morning, when no one is around, he is kidnapped by a rival gangster who coolly cuts down the arm, which drops with a bone-cracking thud. In *The Champion* there are close-ups of a bleeding eye being battered again and again. In *Yellow Sky*, Gregory Peck holds a man under water until he drowns. In *Coroner's Creek*, the bloodied body of Randolph Scott is dragged away and his trigger finger crushed into fleshy pulp by a boot heel. In *Big Cat*, the hero, half conscious after a horrible fight in which no holds are barred, is slashed across the back with an iron chain, breaking his skin. In *The Set Up*, Alan Baxter, a small-time crook, grinds his heel on the knuckles of Robert Ryan, a prize fighter, thereby making it impossible for him to box again. In *Manhandled*, a man is slowly crushed to death by a car which forces him against a wall. In *Thelma Jordan*,

Barbara Stanwyck takes an electric cigarette lighter from an auto dashboard and sticks it into the eye of the gangster who is driving the car so that it rolls over an embankment, and bursts into flames, killing them both.'

The value of these films to the warmongers is well brought out by Margaret Maltz, wife of one of the Hollywood Ten:

'...the American boys in Korea have been regular attenders at the movies. They have seen *Kiss the Blood Off My Hands*, *White Heat*, *Brute Force*, *Gun Crazy*, *The Gun Fighter*, *Colt 45*, *Winchester 76* and *Kiss To-morrow Goodbye*. Do you think these evenings of violence, blood and sadism have not helped to prepare them for what the senior correspondent of *Time* and *Life* in the Pacific calls the "ugly war"—the "especially terrible war", in which "acts and attitudes of the utmost savagery" are forced upon our twenty year olds over there?' (30.8.50.)

Let us be clear. These are meant to brutalize British lads for war too.

The hope that was born during the Second World War of an independent British film industry that would speak to us of our own problems and aspirations in our own idiom, has been destroyed by American big business.

Another illustration of the invasion is in the import of American books, comics and features.

The import of American books and comics has multiplied five times since the end of the war. Marshall Aid funds are used not only for the import of text-books but of comics and obscene literature as a recent prosecution showed.

This stuff pours in by a hundred channels. Some of it comes directly from the States. Some of it is printed in Europe from American blocks and material and imported from there. Some is imported here in sheets (even as packaging materials) and published in Britain by British firms. Now E.C.A. tells us that Marshall Plan countries are to receive 8,000,000 American popular magazines during 1951.

Of the character of the American comics, more will be said in the discussion. Let us mention in addition, journals such as *True Story*, *True Romances*, *True Confessions*, which specialize in 'slush'; as well as those like *Daring Detective*, *Startling Detective*, for which American crime history seems to provide an unlimited supply of rapes, strangulations and poisonings with gruesome photographs to illustrate them.

In 1948 it is reckoned that seventy-five per cent. of all stories in British women's magazines were American. The great British publishing houses of Newnes, Odhams and Amalgamated Press buy them from an American syndicate, employing teams of re-write men to change the idiom, translate for instance Detroit into Birmingham and make them palatable for British readers.

A third illustration is provided by the British press. The *Daily*

*Express*, at the expense of its own news correspondents, takes a service from the American *Time* and *Life* Bureaux in places like Greece, Turkey and the Middle East. Thus America is able to speak with the voice of Beaverbrook.

The Americans not only invade the British market and use up British paper resources for their flood of filth, but by their stockpiling of paper and newsprint are creating grave problems for the printing and publishing industry.

Meanwhile, British publishers lack paper for reprinting the great literary classics or publishing new books and schools are short of essential text-books.

A fourth illustration is provided by commercial dance music. The *Daily Mirror* has summed up the position as follows:

'The plight of British songwriters is so desperate that the Songwriters' Guild of Great Britain have made a formal protest to the B.B.C. against the anti-British attitude of so many well-known performers and dance bands. Out of twenty of the most popular current songs, seventeen are American, one is French and two are British.... For the truth is that most of our best bands and artists are only interested in songs imported from America. British singers repeat the identical U.S. settings parrot-wise. British crooners ape the Americans in slurred vowels and forced inflexions. Sometimes I wonder if I'm tuned in to the B.B.C. at all. One large publishing house has refused to print any new British ballads because they cannot get any broadcasts.' (28th November, 1950.)

The hopes and frustrations of the people are played on in a million variations, brushing aside the idea of struggle, insisting on the idea of wishing.

One notices the completely phoney attitude towards women. One recent 'hit' taught us that 'as a silver dollar goes from hand to hand, a woman goes from man to man'.

Wish-fulfilment, sloppy eroticism and similar features are not harmless simply because we take them for granted. They are useful aids in drugging the minds of the people while U.S. big business goes about its plans.

In all these spheres *vital to the whole American strategy is the control of the distributive machinery and sources of raw materials*. Once they have achieved this they are in a strong position to dictate the form and content of what is produced.

#### *The Penetration of American Ideas into British Culture and Institutions.*

This penetration has become especially noticeable in the social sciences. Of all sciences in bourgeois society, it is the social sciences which are most perverted by imperialism. The social sciences deal with the relations between people. But these relations under capitalism are dominated by class and colonial exploitation. The bourgeoisie does not want its social sciences to investigate the real nature of these

relations since to investigate them would mean to expose them. Bourgeois economics, sociology, psychology has in fact turned its back on the real world. It is increasingly apologist or obscurantist directly serving the interests of big business.

This perversion of the social sciences has gone furthest in the most corrupt and powerful imperialism—the U.S.A. Reactionary ideas, created outside the States, have been imported by them and taken to their furthest extreme. These ideas are now being re-exported back to Western Europe.

This is seen in sociology and 'industrial psychology'. The Americans have developed theories, for instance, that explain strikes as the result of neurosis on the part of the workers. It has been argued, perhaps humorously, that the 'Oedipus' complex is responsible for strife in the mining industry. The miner, you see, loves his mother and hates his father. But in terms of Freudian symbols, his mother is mother earth, i.e. the coal; his father is the mineowner or shall we say the coal board. The miner hates to strike his mother and so goes easy with the coal. He hates his father, and so he is easily incited to attack the coal board. The solution, say the psychologist, is to reverse the complex. Get the miner to hate his mother and love his father. Then he will hew the coal vigorously and love the coal board.

These are the ideas now infiltrating into Britain through American text-books and American-trained psychologists.

We have our own Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, which obtains grants from industrialists, and works closely with an American institution that has the impressive title of 'Research Centre for Group Dynamics'. The Tavistock Institute is concerned with removing 'group tensions' from industry and has sent its units into a number of factories.

Intelligence tests provide another example. The Americans have gone test-mad, turning them into a substitute for education. Now the disease has become widespread in Britain, where it is paraded as a scientific justification for a class system of education, and indeed for class society itself.

Nowhere is the anti-humanism of American reaction shown more clearly than in its recent theories of 'population'—theories made notorious by books like Vogt's *Road to Survival*.

'There is little hope,' writes Vogt, 'that the world will escape the horrors of extensive famines in China within the next few years. But from the world point of view, these may be not only desirable, but indispensable.'

Now, following the American line, comes Julian Huxley, who after gloomily predicting Eastern rates of increase are outstripping the West, declared:

'... We need a new view of human destiny. Why in heaven's name should anyone suppose that mere quantity of human organism is a good thing, irrespective either of their own inherent quality or the quality of their life and experiences.' (*Harpers*, September, 1950.)

Is the description of cannibal really so undeserved? It justifies the maniacal talk of creating radio-active zones, of treating the Asiatic peoples as inferior beings to be destroyed without a second's thought.

In science itself, the most important effect of American pressure has been the militarization of British science. Of total scientific expenditure, research for the armed forces now takes 82.5 per cent., as compared with 35 per cent. in 1937. Even by 1948, 64 per cent. of those employed in Government research and 20 per cent. of all scientific research workers were employed in war research. (Cf. *The Militarization of Science*, Kennedy and McLeod, *Modern Quarterly*, Autumn, 1950.)

Following America's example, biological research becomes increasingly occupied with problems of how to kill millions by deadly bacteria; physics with atomic warfare. Preparing for war, scientists are caught up in the witch-hunt and loyalty oath. And so science is perverted and stultified.

It is a tradition in Britain for non-commercial research teams not to patent discoveries which are of use in medicine. British research workers discovered penicillin but did not patent it. The Americans, however, who have completely commercialized science, took out a patent on its manufacture. The result is that we are now paying royalties to America for a British discovery.

This is the scientific morality the Americans are now exporting to Britain.

I have mentioned the witch-hunt and the loyalty oath. They constitute two of the most sinister American exports. The loyalty oath is not, as is often thought, a Nazi invention. Both witch-hunt and loyalty oath were used in America long before Nazi Germany, and the American trusts have since perfected them on the basis of German experience.

The American trusts know very well the power of education. The witch-hunt they have launched in schools and universities is meant to ensure that no one will challenge the 'way of life' of the trusts. In New York, eight teachers, including the President and Secretary of the New York Teachers' Union, were recently suspended from duty, without pay, and then dismissed for refusing to answer questions about their political beliefs.

Under regulations announced by the New York Superintendent of Schools, 'principals were to make secret reports on the loyalty of teachers. Assistant superintendents were to report on elementary and junior high school principals. Divisional Associate Superintendents were to report on high school principals. The Chief Superintendent (Jansen) would report on Associate and Assistant Superintendents'. (*Searchlight*, p. 210.)

The witch-hunt has been ruthlessly carried into the universities. The independent status of the University of California has been destroyed. More than twenty-six members of the staff, none of them Communists, have been dismissed because they opposed the special 'loyalty oath'. The rule of Wall Street over the Universities may be

judged by the fact that 71 per cent. of all the Regents of American universities are bankers, business executives or lawyers.

How they use their rule is illustrated by this excerpt from an examination of Dr. Melvin Rader, of Washington University. *Not* accused of being a Communist, the interrogation by the local Un-American Activities Committee was as follows:

- Q. Do you believe in the form of government that exists in the United States of America?
- A. I certainly believe, sir, in the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights and the government set up under that Constitution, as it would be interpreted, for example, by the Supreme Court.
- Q. Do you believe in our system of society, a capitalist system?
- A. I believe that there ought to be enough improvement of our economic system so that we could avoid very great depressions and a certain amount of unnecessary poverty, and therefore I can't say that I believe in every feature and aspect of our present economic system.
- Q. Do you believe in the capitalist system?
- A. I think I can best answer that question by saying my general point of view about these economic matters corresponds very closely . . . to the point of view set out in the reports and recommendations of the National Resources Planning Board . . .
- Q. I am not asking you what they think, I am asking you what you think. . . . Do you believe in the capitalist form of government as it exists in the United States of America to-day?

(Quoted *Witchhunt*, Carey McWilliams, p. 147.)

Looking for Communists? Of course not. The aim is to bludgeon anyone critical of big business.

Now with the help of the F.B.I. they are pressing them on Britain.

We will not deal here with the purge in the Civil Service, the recent actions of the L.C.C. or the unsuccessful attempt to impose a loyalty oath on employees of the Liverpool City Council, but give some examples from the professional sphere.

It is true that in our universities we have not had the open sackings that have taken place in the University of California for instance. Our most open example has been the elimination of Andrew Rothstein from the School of Slavonic Studies. The only suggestion of a charge was the fantastic one of 'inadequate scholarship'. The real reason has been made plain by the appointment of that rabid anti-Soviet writer, Hugh Seton Watson, to a chair of Russian history at the very school at which Andrew Rothstein was found unsuitable to teach Russian economic history. Here the witch-hunt proceeds—but by undercover methods. University Appointment Boards make private investigations of the political opinions of applicants if they are at all suspected of left-wing politics. The files of M.I.5 are consulted for certain university appointments. It has become a widespread practice to put the political opinions of a left-wing person on a covering note to his testimonials, especially if he is thought to be a Communist.

The long arm of the Americans reaches into the Press. It is said that Mr. Herbert Gunn, Editor of the *Evening Standard*, was sacked for an alleged 'anti-American' headline. A sub-editor was dismissed from one of the largest News Agencies for treatment of a Truman speech which did not follow the line of American press agencies. Tom Hopkinson, editor of *Picture Post*, was sacked for attempting to publish the inside story of American savagery in Korea, because it 'offended the U.S.A.'

What is the lesson of the witch-hunt in America to-day and in Nazi Germany yesterday? It is that the attack on the Communists is only a try-out; it is then extended to those who would call themselves Socialists, and to militant Trade Unionists, then to Liberals until all thinking that was critical of big business has been stifled.

Academic and professional freedom is being destroyed in America. Under their pressure, it is seriously endangered in Britain to-day. Honour those, like the Hollywood ten, fighting back in America. The lesson is that all who value liberty in Britain must rally to defend it.

It is worth noting, before concluding this section, how much of the American 'way of life' is directed at young people. The reason is clear. Our young lads are to be trained as Yankee cannon-fodder. They are to be militarized. And to aid this process, they are to be Americanized. Militarization and Americanization cannot be divorced.

Our youngsters are being brought up to know no other films or songs than American. They are being encouraged to wear American clothes, speak with American accents, ape American ways.

But our young people are not simply giving way. Growing numbers are ready to resist.

We can draw three conclusions from this survey.

First: we are not dealing here with a problem of 'cultural exchange' but with a systematic, well-organized and financed attempt to impose coca-colonization on the British people. We are dealing with 'cultural imperialism'.

Second: this problem does not arise because we have a common language with the Americans. They are doing precisely the same to the peoples of Western Europe.

Third: such cultural imperialism, the swamping of Britain with American cultural products of the most degraded and reactionary kind, cannot but retard and damage the cultural development of Britain itself.

### 3. WHAT HAS MADE THIS INVASION POSSIBLE?

The basic reason is that British monopolists and right wing Labour leaders are engaged in selling British interests, lock, stock and barrel to the Americans.

As our programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, states:

'For the first time in its history our country has lost its independence and freedom of action in its foreign, economic and military policy to a foreign power—the United States of America. . . .

Concerned only to defend capitalism and profit, the Labour leaders and the Tories openly betray Britain's national interests. Such differences as they allow themselves with America are those of the bankrupt junior partner striving to retain what it can in face of American pressure.'

Such salesmen must have lost all national pride. Men who would barter away for a few dollars our economic and political independence will surely not hesitate to squander our cultural independence. Hence the capitulation to America over films for instance.

At best our cultural traditions and achievements are for them dollar earners, whether they come from selling our precious manuscripts or as attractions for American tourists.

The second reason is this: the dominant culture created by British imperialism is itself so decadent that, so far from resisting the American 'way of life', it has welcomed it as a more vigorous and full-blooded expression of its own outlook. More than that, it has contributed a good deal to this 'way of life', providing some of its most basic ideas.

Lenin remarked that already in the mid-nineteenth century, Britain possessed certain characteristics of imperialism—a monopolist position on the world market, and a vast colonial empire. On this basis, Britain built an economy which lived to no small extent on the labour of colonial and semi-colonial peoples. The building of such an economy and its maintenance has involved ceaseless destruction of the economy and cultures of other peoples. The British bourgeoisie plundered India, Ireland and plunders Africa, West Indies and Malaya to-day.

Such parasitism and cultural oppression of other peoples could not but deeply affect the cultural development of Britain itself, as William Morris understood and explained in his essays.

It has given rise to a reactionary trend in culture which has become more and more dominant, based on contempt for the British as well as colonial peoples. The roots may be traced much earlier, but the blossoming has taken place in the twentieth century. A Northcliffe, cradled in hatred for the Irish national movement, created the yellow, jingo press. A Kipling sentimentalizes colonial wars. A Joseph Chamberlain lyricizes over 'the Anglo-Saxon race, so proud, so tenacious, self-confident and determined... which will infallibly be the predominant force of future history and universal civilization'.

Founded on super-profits, rotten with parasitism, imperialism has sought to separate the creative worker from the common people, whether in the colonies or at home. Such divorce can only mean the decay of culture, since it separates the writer and the artist from the source of fresh inspiration—the people and their struggles.

What is the outlook of those creative workers to-day who in essence justify things as they are? They turn their back even on the achievements of bourgeois thought. They are obliged to go back to feudal, Catholic conceptions in order to disguise the real forces at work. Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, for instance, never cease to moan

that 'man is inherently sinful' and so justify squalor and exploitation.

That high-priest of Anglo-American literature, T. S. Eliot, has set out his view of a society favourable to culture :

In a healthily stratified society,' he writes, 'public affairs would be a responsibility not equally borne; a greater responsibility would be inherited by those who inherit special advantages, and in whom self interest, and interest for the sake of their families (a 'stake in the country') should cohere with public spirit. The governing élite of the nation as a whole, would consist of those whose responsibility was inherited with their affluence and position.' (*Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, 1948, p. 84.)

Such a philosophy naturally cannot resist that which comes from the land of the trusts.

The logical outcome is that such men are obliged to betray their own traditions, since the Graham Greene's and the Orwell's cannot build on the healthy humanism of Fielding and Dickens; but lean instead on the slum or tough naturalism imported from the States of a Hemingway and a J. T. Farrell.

And from this, they are led to desert their own country. It is interesting and significant that Auden and Isherwood emigrated to America even before the war. Aldous Huxley has worked there for long years.

In this way, British imperialist culture does not simply receive from America. It contributes, or shall we say, interpenetrates with American reaction. We produce an Orwell or an Aldous Huxley. America puffs them up, mass produces them and re-exports them back to unlucky Europe. A common language facilitates this, though is not the cause of it.

*The very scale of this mass reproduction and export of reactionary ideas to Britain is itself a force helping to swamp resisting trends, and strengthening reaction in this country.*

Clearly if we wish successfully to combat the American 'way of life', we must also expose its fifth column in Britain.

But it should also be clear that it is only possible to defend British culture against its enemies if those concerned to defend it take an active part in the struggle for peace, and national independence, recognizing that the threat to our culture is inseparable from the threat to peace and to our political and economic independence.

#### 4. HOW WE MUST FIGHT.

It must be said that we have deeply underestimated the character and reality of this threat. Our conference to-day will certainly help us to put this right. But our weakness is not only that we have not seen the threat, but we have not sufficiently understood what it is that is threatened.

In fighting back we must see first of all, that what is threatened is our entire British cultural heritage and the possibility of advancing it.

You may ask: is there such a thing as a British cultural heritage which we Communists should unite to defend along with millions of people of the most varied political and social opinions? There is.

What names spring to mind when we review our heritage?

In literature, the line from Chaucer to Shakespeare, Milton, Fielding, Blake, Robert Burns, Shelley, Byron, Charles Dickens, William Morris, Thomas Hardy, Lewis Grassic Gibbon, George Bernard Shaw.

In art, our magnificent landscape painters like Constable and Turner; the great people's painter Hogarth; Rowlandson and the whole school of illustrators.

In music, the achievements of Byrd and Purcell; our folk songs and dances are still insufficiently known to the people.

In science and medicine: Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle, Newton, Harvey, Hunter, Darwin, T. H. Huxley, Faraday, Rutherford, Lord Kelvin.

In political economy: William Petty, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Bray and Thompson.

Just the bare roll call is enough to rouse one's pride.

What is the essence of this tradition? I think we can sum it up, in spite of all class limitations, as profoundly humanist, confident in man's ability to master nature, confident in the power of rational thought.

Do our big business men or modern decadents carry forward this tradition? On the contrary they are obliged to betray it.

I mentioned earlier how many of them are obliged to go back to reactionary feudal and Catholic conceptions. The Eliots, Graham Greenes and Evelyn Waugh reject the achievements of the bourgeois revolution, reject those elements of humanism and confidence in reason developed within bourgeois society right up to the present time. Milton, champion of a revolutionary struggle cannot be understood by T. S. Eliot, advocate of a return to a feudal order. The materialism of T. H. Huxley, however 'shamefaced' (as Engels said), is rejected by Bertrand Russell, who gives way to ideas of the 'unknowability' of the world.

In short our cultural heritage is the enemy of the anti-human outlook of Anglo-American big business, and the dying culture they seek to foster.

Just a word at this point, on the Festival of Britain. We are unreservedly in favour of celebrating the achievements of the British people and we support that element in the Festival of Britain which does this. Let's not deceive ourselves, however, that this is the aim of the Government. It is being organized to turn us into a kind of shop window for earning American dollars. It is meant, with its glitter and glamour, to hide from the British people the fact that Britain, with all its achievements, is being sold piece by piece. At least in London and Edinburgh, high prices prevent the working people from sharing in the celebrations.

Yet here and there the people themselves have been able to take a

hand in the arrangements or to influence them, such as the concert of the W.M.A. on 1st June, called *Singing Englishmen*. And almost in spite of the Government something of the genius of the British people is coming through.

In this way, as in other ways, we must draw the lessons of the Festival of Britain for the people. We must show that the whole spirit of our achievements is now being betrayed by big business and the right wing Labour leaders; and that those who have pride in this tradition and would continue it, must stand firm for our independence.

My first point is then, that to popularize and re-discover our cultural heritage and to unite wide sections in defence of it, is a vital part of our fight against the threat from the United States.

But secondly, this fight also requires that the American threat be exposed and action organized against it.

The conditions are ripe. The mood of the people is deeply anti-American. It would be a tragic error to think that we alone understood the menace of this invasion. On the contrary, as the threat grows, a real national consciousness is beginning to spread among the people.

It is illustrated by the Conference on the Defence of the British Film Industry, convened by five Trade Unions and presided over by Sir Lawrence Olivier.

The Americans themselves are aware of the resistance. In January of this year, the *Saturday Review of Literature* devoted a whole issue to 'America and the Mind of Europe'. The editor posed this problem. There exists, he wrote:

'... a reluctance of Europeans in general, and of the opinion creating intellectuals in particular, to see in the United States a leader worth following. ... We Americans are faced with a prodigious paradox. We have by and large the best moral case in the world, yet we are morally on the defensive.' (13.1.51.)

Though vast feeling exists, the greater part of it remains submerged; action lags behind the readiness of the people to act. The teachers and parents who object to the comics; the Trade Unionists who oppose American methods in the factory and the Trades Union movement; the resentment of those who live in the 'occupied areas' of Britain such as Warrington, East Anglia, and Oxfordshire—an area steadily growing—all this is not yet reflected in action though the conditions for it exist.

*We ask our comrades to take part in spreading the truth about the American 'way of life' and its influence in Britain.* Using the material of this conference, there should be arranged throughout the Party open Branch meetings, public forums, factory-gate meetings and lectures on the American threat to our culture, and articles for our Press. Our cultural groups should provide panels of speakers on special aspects. Whenever matters bearing on this are published in the daily and weekly Press, national and local, Party members should take the initiative without prompting and write in and start a discussion.

We need also to find ways and means of drawing the people into action. We can encourage organs of the Labour Movement, Trades Councils, etc., to support the proposals of the Conference on Defence of the British Film Industry. We should get together with local citizens to see the managers of local cinemas about showing such films as *Steel Helmet*. We could more widely emulate those who organized the splendid demonstration on Willie McGee outside the showing of *Storm Warning*.

We should initiate discussions in Parent-Teachers' Associations and Co-operative Guilds and educational bodies on the pernicious effects of American comics and films on children with a view to resolutions, deputations to local M.P.'s, etc., demanding their import be stopped.

We should encourage people to express their solidarity with that America which is fighting reaction. And I propose that we ourselves from this Conference, send a message to Paul Robeson and Howard Fast, greeting them and their colleagues, expressing our admiration for their struggle and pledging our unity in action.

These are only illustrations of ways of drawing the people into the struggle.

In all this we should not neglect the use of our journals but especially the *Daily Worker*.

A third aspect of the fight is the need to give every support to those who are at this very moment helping to develop a popular, progressive culture based on our traditions. It is limited, it is not widely known, but it is developing and growing.

You will remember that, in the Second World War, because we in Britain were taking part in a war of liberation, a splendid flowering of the arts took place in our country. So too, the development of the popular struggle for peace and national independence can create the conditions for an upsurge of creative work.

We need to begin to wage our own battle of the books. Not as Swift saw it, between ancient and modern writers, but between progressives and decadents. We shall publish in our press articles and lists of progressive writers, books, films, plays. We should endeavour to get them circulated widely in public libraries and other means. We should assist everywhere the efforts to show progressive films. And it will help us in our fight if we use fully the progressive literature and art of all other countries: the novels of Howard Fast and Ilya Ehrenburg, the poems of Pablo Naruda, films like *Michurin* and *Open City*.

This conference will be glad to hear that while cultural journal after journal is being obliged to close down, we are discussing plans to issue a new one.

It is in the course of our counter-struggle to present our traditions and popularize all that is progressive to-day, that we may best put to all honest creative workers the demand that their own work shall become more closely integrated with the struggle of the people.

Within our own Party, the phrase is now often heard—‘Socialist realism’. What is it? It is an artistic method which not only shows things as they are but in the process of change; more than that, which reveals the causes, the contradictions leading to that change. And because it illuminates this for us, helps us, shall we say, moves us, to take part in changing what is portrayed. Such a method clearly can only be *fully* developed in a Socialist society where Marxist ideas begin to grasp the whole people. But it is an illusion to think that therefore it is the private property of those in the Socialist part of the world. Socialist realism can become a powerful artistic method for us in Britain, insofar as our own writers and artists really strive to apply it to our own conditions and stage of struggle.

What is the morality of the culture we are now striving to build? It is one which carries forward the humanism and rational spirit of our traditions. It has confidence in the ability of the people to solve their problems and build a peaceful world. It rejects despair and perversion as the content of the arts.

*But how shall such a morality be advanced?*

*It can advance only on the basis of the forward movement of the working class and the mass of the people.* Let me say here that the magnificent solidarity and humanism of the dockers has given us a fine example.

And for these reasons:

To maintain the class rule of a tiny minority, the big monopolists are prepared to sell out a whole nation; they are patriotic only to their bank balances and these they are prepared to follow round the world if necessary. The working people, on the contrary, by their sweat and struggle have created what wealth Britain possesses. Their interests are entirely bound up with the full development of Britain and its people, and therefore with its independence. The working class, which constitutes in any case the majority of the population is the force that alone can lead all sections of the people, professional workers and technicians in defence of our national independence, and so also in defence of our culture.

The guarantee of our national independence can only be by ending the rule of big business and the advance of the people led by the working class to political power, and on this basis, the building of Socialism.

In our Programme you can study why Socialism alone can finally solve Britain's problems.

‘Socialism,’ declares the programme, ‘ensures that production is organized for the use of the people and not for profit of the tiny minority of capitalists. It ends the gulf between poverty and plenty, and frees the creative energies of the people and the productive resources of the nation for gigantic economic, social and cultural advances on the basis of a planned Socialist economy.’

Hitherto, class society has given the opportunities of education and culture only to a favoured few. If, in spite of that, a few like Robert

Burns, and Charles Dickens have smashed through the barrier and helped create our imperishable tradition, we may judge the better what deep reserves of wonderful talent exists among our people when freed from the frustrations of capitalism. Socialism will destroy the class system of education since its aim is the full development of all.

Socialism for the first time in human history gives science its rightful place in human life. Big business sees in science a source of profitable techniques, or the inventor of weapons to protect and extend its profits. By militarizing science it degrades both science and scientists. Maddened by the threat to its system, it abandons any pretence at a scientific outlook and encourages every form of mysticism and irrationalism.

The creative artist under Socialism will take the place that Stalin has indicated, that of 'engineer of the soul'. Inseparable from the people and productive labour, the arts will flourish.

We shall become a nation of scientists and artists and so accomplish the great leap described by Engels—from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom.

It is Socialism which creates the best conditions for our artists and scientists, for professional workers and technicians. Their fundamental interests lie in associating themselves with the working class for advance to Socialism.

Is it just dreaming? We are able to see before our eyes the creative release made possible by working class power in the Soviet Union, China and the Peoples' Democracies.

In their recent report on a visit to the Soviet Union, Leslie Hurry, Andrew Rothstein and Professor Wrenn wrote the following:

'We have no wish to utter harsh words, but it is difficult to restrain them when we recall the distorted pictures of the alleged "barrenness" and "dreariness" of Soviet intellectual life, so commonly drawn abroad, and when we contrast them with the opulent and many-hued reality.' (November, 1950.)

Here there is taking place an unequalled rebirth of popular culture, confident and optimistic. It is our aim to share in it, and to contribute to it. It is the aim of the American imperialists to destroy it.

In summarizing this section, I would say: We must unite all people concerned with culture for the popularizing and rediscovery of our cultural heritage; for the exposure of the American threat and for action against it; for the encouragement of all progressive trends in British culture to-day based on our heritage.

All this amounts to more than a defensive struggle; it is a positive counter-offensive which can lead to a mighty development of British culture. But it will only be possible if it is based on the forward movement of the working class and the people to political power and the building of Socialism.

## 5. COMMUNISTS ARE PATRIOTS AND INTERNATIONALISTS.

In our Programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, we Communists have stated:

'We stand for a Britain, free, strong and independent. We want our country to be subordinate and subservient to no foreign power, but to stand in friendly association and equal alliance with all powers that recognize and respect Britain's national interests.'

We have convened this Conference because of our passionate concern to defend and advance our cultural heritage as part of a free and independent Britain.

We are not jingos, it is true. We refuse to identify the interest of the nation with those of the moneybags.

It is the interests of the people which are the true interests of the nation, and those who fight for these interests are the true patriots.

Moreover, the jingos and the moneybags cannot be internationalists because they stand for the oppression of other peoples.

Certainly they argue that national sovereignty is 'obsolete'. But is it not clear that to break down the national sovereignty of nations suits to-day the most powerful imperialist country? It would and does mean surrendering these countries up to the American trusts.

These ideas on national sovereignty are therefore the opposite of internationalism.

How closely these American-inspired ideas are linked with the American war plans may be seen in the following statement by Bertrand Russell. This rather bloodthirsty philosopher addressed British school children as follows:

'The Western Alliance with the United States and the Commonwealth will have the nucleus for such a force. It must impose itself upon the whole world, and remain powerful, uniquely so, until the whole world has been educated into a unified sanity. . . . It will be possible for the next war to put an end to wars.'

Thus the idea of world government becomes an argument for war against the countries that will not give up their national independence.

Does it not follow that such people cannot see cultural exchange as something between equals, but as requiring the imposition of one 'way of life' upon other peoples?

The true interest of the people, however, does not rest in oppressing other peoples. True patriots share Milton's view that 'he who entrenches on the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own'.

Thus they are able to co-operate with other peoples in defence of their national independence and for the sharing of their achievements. In this way, patriotism and internationalism are inseparable.

This is why we Communists welcome and support the proposals for cultural exchange of the World Peace Council because they are based first on recognition of the national independence and sovereignty of all

peoples free from outside intervention in their affairs; and second, on the fullest development of culture based on national traditions and peculiarities.

It is on this basis that British culture can best make its contribution to world friendship and advance.

I would say this in closing:

Lenin said, 'We have national pride, therefore we hate our slavish past'. To this let us add 'and we hate our slavish present'.

The picture we have revealed in this report of the U.S. 'way of life' and its invasion of Britain, can only arouse disgust and shame in the hearts of the British people.

Certainly the American trusts have won a number of victories. But our long and powerful traditions of struggle present a barrier which these arrogant gum-chewers will not be allowed to destroy. Whatever their demagogic, it remains a fact that the interests of the overwhelming majority of the British people are opposed to that of the imperialists.

Nations are not easily destroyed. In fighting back we are filled with unshakeable confidence and optimism in the true strength of the British people and their great future.

The creatures of Wall Street want to poison our minds for war. We shall defeat them.

They want us to accept the American century. They will not succeed in imposing on us an American century.

And precisely through our struggle for peace, independence and cultural advance we shall create a front that will sweep away the traitors and the obstructions built by the rich; build a society where the creative energies of the people are released to continue, in a new splendour, our wonderful heritage of the past.

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Since this report was delivered, readers will be interested in two items of news which have since been reported.

One is that the dismissal of Tom Hopkinson as editor of *Picture Post* has been followed by the 'resignation' of Ted Castle, who had succeeded Hopkinson as editor of that journal. On May 19th, the *New Statesman's London Diary* carried the following paragraph:

'I referred last week to Ted Castle's resignation from *Picture Post*. As he has now left, I feel free to refer to an incident which has caused, and is still causing, much perturbation in Fleet Street. During the week in which an article on the Chinese Army by Andrew Roth was being printed (it appeared in the issue of 10th March) an official from the American Embassy called upon Castle to explain to him why, in his view, it was undesirable that Roth's article should be published.... He also said that Mr. Roth was not *persona grata* with the State Department.... That an American Embassy official should attempt to bring this kind of moral pressure to bear on a British editor is profoundly disturbing.'

The second item of news is the report that the annual Congress of Co-operative Women's Guilds passed a resolution of 23rd May, condemning the debasing ideas of many American films and magazines circulating in Britain and decided (1) to bring this matter to the notice of local M.P.'s and to raise the matter in Parliament; (2) to conduct propaganda in Co-operative journals and through all organizations who are against this portrayal of a Western way of life; (3) to bring pressure on local licensing authorities.

## OUR HISTORICAL TRADITION

I WANT to speak on the question of patriotism.

When one outcome of the present war policy was seen to be the appointment of an American admiral with authority over the British fleet, we were treated by the Tories to a display of crocodile hysterics in line with the best traditions of jingo patriotism, cashing in on a particularly clear example of our loss of national independence. You could hear the echoes of 'Rule Britannia', of 'God who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet', as a frightened imperial ruling class called on the arrogant traditions of its prime.

This tradition of jingo patriotism is so strong that there has been for many years among Left wing and progressive opinion in this country a deep suspicion of 'patriotic' manifestations, a healthy reaction in view of all that this brand of patriotism has done to divide and mislead the workers on the true nature of imperialist aggression. I say 'has done', but I should say 'is doing'. To take but one example. Empire Day, or Commonwealth Day as it is fashionable to call it now, is yearly celebrated with much pomp and ceremony in our schools.

But to-day we are faced with a new situation, the growth of genuine patriotic opposition as the meaning of foreign domination comes home to ordinary people in a thousand different ways. This opposition is showing itself in action, as workers resist U.S. speed-up methods, as housewives protest against special coal allocations to U.S. married quarters, as parents grow aware of the filth offered to children in the comics, and we need a new patriotic tradition to lead and inspire this fight. Why should the worst of jingo nationalism be allowed to ally itself with movements such as these?

Neither Tory nor Right wing Labour leaders can represent or lead the struggle to defend our national interests. They are too deeply committed to policies which are dead against the interests of the mass of the people. Only the working people can give that leadership. We have in our Labour movement a long history of support for national liberation struggles abroad, for the Greeks in their struggle with Turkey, for Hungary and Italy in the fight against the Austrian Empire, for India and Ireland in the fight against British imperialism. We have in our Labour movement too, a record of struggle at home for democratic rights, for political power, for social advance, from which a great genuine patriotic tradition can be built.

But we must face this fact. The value of these traditions depends on how far people are conscious of them, and this consciousness is as yet largely unawakened. We have a great deal to do to change this state of affairs. The history of the British people is not a dead record of the past, it is dynamite. Full time historians have a special

responsibility for this work, but it is a task that must be taken up far outside the ranks of those who have made a special study of history.

How can this work be done? There are many ways. Local history can be of the greatest value. In many areas there is material on the militant struggles of the past fairly easy of access, in files of local papers, in old pamphlets, in the memories of older workers, which can be put together and given popular form, dramatic form where possible. Come to the professional historians if help is needed in research, and draw in artists, actors and any other help you can.

This is Festival year. Many areas will be reviewing events of the past century. Find out what is being planned in your area. Is the history of the Labour movement being properly dealt with? If not, find out why, raise the issue in the local press or through organizations of the Labour movement.

There is the reinstatement of our militants to be undertaken. Don't let the Social Democrats get away with making a domestic pet of William Morris or any other Socialist pioneer.

Parents, have a look at the history text-books your children are using. What picture are they getting of the events of the past, of the Labour movement, of the expansion of the Empire?

It is our job to make the record of what ordinary people have done and have achieved, common knowledge in this country. Only on this basis can we build the real patriotic tradition we need, and send Tory jingoism into the dustbin of history.

Real patriotism? James Connolly summed it up best writing in August, 1914:

'I make no war on patriotism, never have done. But against the patriotism of capitalism, the patriotism which makes the interest of capitalism the supreme test of right and duty, I place the patriotism of the working class, the patriotism which judges every public act by its effect on the fortunes of those who toil. That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic.'

## WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE MORAL ISSUES TO-DAY

SHORTLY after the last war, I visited the United States. In the course of my visit I stayed with a Professor of English Literature at a small New England college. He was rather over forty years old, and had failed to make any mark in the academic world. He was—he thought—at the top of a rather inferior ladder, and, while he was comfortably off, there were no real prospects of increasing either his standing or his salary. All around him he could see his friends, either in business or in the more piratical professions, ‘making good’ in a big way in the post-war boom; and no doubt it was the grotesque recrudescence of imperialist *Babbit*-itis which accompanied their inflated incomes which caused him one evening to reflect rather ruefully upon the chances he had missed.

‘You know where I went wrong?’ he said. ‘Just after the first war I was teaching in the Near East. Now, when I was there I noticed that there was one thing the people lacked—fresh meat. You know what I ought to have done? I ought to have gone straight back to the States—chucked up all this Shakespeare stuff—and got a few guys I knew to put up some capital. Then I could have gone back there, bought up some old warehouses for abattoirs, and put in some first-class American refrigerating equipment.’ He squared his jaw above his virile cowboy-style shirt with the decision of a J. P. Morgan, banged his fist on the table, and glowered through his horn-rim spectacles. ‘Boy, I could have set up a *chain of slaughterhouses* throughout the Holy Land! My God, I could have cleaned up!’

I did not make this story up, and the Professor was not pulling my leg. The ‘American dream’ really is as childish and as debased as this and its poison can be found in every field of American life. Those who have never been to the United States and who fool themselves (like some readers of the *New Statesman*) that Hollywood, the Hearst Press and the comics, represent only a lunatic fringe of the American bourgeoisie, sometimes suggest that *Babbit* is an out-of-date joke on the ‘twenties: unfortunately it only foreshadows the horror of to-day. In the last two or three years the dream of my Professor has acquired for me a terrible significance—and has revealed itself in a more terrible actuality for the peasants of Korea and the people of a threatened world.

But perhaps this story will illustrate my first point. When we take the message of this Conference back to the people, let us not be too heavy-handed about it. It is necessary for us to understand the full seriousness of the threat to our culture, and to have the facts and the figures before us. But we will not defeat this threat with facts and

figures alone, and we have on our side in this fight one great resource, and that is the healthy sense of ridicule within our people. This has been shown with great effect already by the response which Unity Theatre has won with their show, *Here Goes*. It was shown again this morning by Peter Major, when he used the weapon of satire in his attack upon the American comics. What we should remember is that, when we use this weapon, our battle is already half won. For a very long time the American, whether tourist, or business-man, or pettifogging academic, has been—and sometimes unfairly—an object for ridicule amongst our people. I do not suggest that we can laugh the American threat away: but we should keep the biting edge of British humour sharp, and turned in that direction.

My second point is related to this. To-day is the time when we must at last take the *moral* offensive firmly into our own hands. Nothing has been more striking about this Conference than the strong *positive* note struck in Sam Aaronovitch's report and also in the discussion. Perhaps some of us came to the Conference afraid that a lot would be said about the American threat to our culture, but very little about the promise within British culture: that has certainly not been the case. I would like to refer once again to the man who, above all others, is the forerunner of this Conference, and who, in his time, carried on almost single-handed the activities of the Writers', Historians', Artists', Architects', and Literature groups all in one—and who (if the stories about his command of certain plain Anglo-Saxon words are true) was the forerunner of the Linguistics group as well. William Morris was accustomed to go straight to the point in any matter he took up, and when he had occasion to write of America at the time of the hysteria accompanying the judicial murder of the Chicago Anarchists, he dealt with the American bourgeoisie's pretence of democracy thus:

'... a country with universal suffrage, no king, no House of Lords, no privilege as you fondly think; only a little standing army, chiefly used for the murder of red-skins; a democracy after your model; and with all that a society corrupt to the core, and at this moment engaged in suppressing freedom with just the same reckless brutality and blind ignorance as the Czar of all the Russias uses.'

The 'little standing army' is now—how many million strong? But the brutality and the ignorance are the same.

Among the traducers of Morris's memory, the name of one American 'scholar' must be given a prominent place—a certain Mr. Lloyd Eric Grey, whose book *William Morris: A Prophet of England's New Order* has been recently acclaimed in Britain, despite the fact that it is both ignorant and thoroughly dishonest. One of the lies which this book seeks to perpetuate is that William Morris became generally 'disillusioned' in revolutionary Socialism towards the end of his life. It may therefore be apposite for several reasons to quote from the last article written by Morris, for the May Day issue of *Justice* in 1896, a few months before his death:

... there are some who will say, "Yes, indeed, the capitalist system can come to no good end, death in a dustbin is its doom, but will not its end be at least speedy without any help of ours?" My friends, I fear not. The capitalist classes are doubtless alarmed at the spread of Socialism all over the civilized world. They have at least an instinct of danger; but with that instinct comes the other one of self-defence. Look how the whole capitalist world is stretching out long arms towards the barbarous world and grabbing and clutching in eager competition at countries whose inhabitants don't want them; nay, in many cases, would rather die in battle, like the valiant men they are, than have them. . . .

'And what is all this for? For the spread of abstract ideas of civilization? For pure benevolence, for the honour and glory of conquest? Not at all. It is for the opening of fresh markets to take in all the fresh profit-producing wealth which is growing greater and greater every day; in other words, to make fresh opportunities for waste; the waste of our labour and our lives.

'And as I say this is an irresistible instinct on the part of the capitalists, an impulse like hunger, and I believe that it can only be met by another hunger, the hunger for freedom and fair play for all, both people and peoples. Anything less than that the capitalist power will brush aside. But that they cannot; for what will it mean? The most important part of their machinery, the "hands" becoming MEN, and saying, "Now at last we will it; we will produce no more for profit but for *use*, for *happiness*, for *LIFE*".'

These words of William Morris have all the force of prophesy for us to-day. Never has there been a time in the history of the world when the real moral issues before man have been clearer. Perhaps the issues are so clear and so big that we sometimes fail to grasp them. We are offered Life or Death. On the one hand, the spreading stain of corruption and defeat in culture and human endeavour, on the other the liberation of the creative energies of whole peoples. On the one hand the burnt earth and steaming seas of a devastated planet, and on the other the flowering of wastes deserted by man for many hundreds of years. This is the only choice before man. The defenders of American capitalism have nothing whatsoever to offer to the people, but more work, and more poverty, and at the end of it, Death in a desperate and indiscriminate war. Beneath all the nice quibbles about means and ends, all the clever things which Orwell or Koestler or Eliot or their American counterparts have to say, will be found the same facts: napalm, the Hell Bomb, and the butchers of Syngman Rhee.

But here we must note a curious fact. It is at this very moment, when the American capitalists and their British apologists are threatening the very fundamentals of society, that they have gained, in this country, the initiative in the field of morality. It is under cover to talk of 'moral values', 'freedom and democracy', 'the western way of life', and so forth, that preparations are pressed forward for the

next war. You need only turn on the B.B.C. for five minutes to get a bellyful. And (since the old lie that Socialism 'can't work' was shattered for good when the Red Army routed the Nazis at Stalingrad) it is under cover of the same talk about 'human rights' and so on that they try to turn the minds of the people of Britain and America against the Soviet Union, China and the new democracies. And yet, in the face of this, we remain strangely silent. Why is this?

I think there are two reasons. The first is in the very enormity of the lie. It is the Big Lie technique of Goebbels over again. The Lie is so monstrous that we cannot be troubled with it, we turn our backs on it, and divert the argument on to more practical questions.

The second is in the history of our Labour movement. Few peoples can have been blessed with so many politicians who have buttered their careers with 'idealistic' phrases—the MacDonalds, Snowdens, Morrisons, and the rest who have kept the people occupied with star-gazing into the 'moral' firmament while they themselves have climbed into comfortable positions. This has led, within our movement, to a definite suspicion of any moral argument as such, a strong inhibition against appealing to the healthy moral feelings of the people.

But this inhibition, this refusal to go on to the offensive on moral questions, is simply to cut off our nose to spite someone else's face. Our morality is not one based on abstract 'principles' of freedom, justice and love, which remain unchanged in every circumstance, or, rather, can be used to justify any and every policy that is thought expedient. Our morality is based on one principle only—man, his real suffering and his real happiness. No matter how often they say 'freedom' we say that the burning of Korean villages with jellied petrol bombs is a vile and inhuman practice. No matter if the B.B.C. drones on about 'western democracy' night after night it still will not alter our sympathy for the trade unionists imprisoned and shot in Spain or Greece, or our knowledge that the instigators and propagandists of a new world war are setting themselves against all the canons of elementary human fellow feeling by which the common people of every land have learnt to live.

That is the point. The people already know this: but we are slow to learn it. We have allowed ourselves to be argued on to the defensive. Too often we find ourselves arguing defensively as to whether or not (for example) Petkov was really organizing a military coup or Cardinal Mindszenty was a black-marketeer, and in the intricacies and details we forget to take the argument forward to the simple issues which the people already understand. The profound revulsion in this country against that evil man, MacArthur, and the universal relief at his dismissal, is surely an example of the living moral health of our people?

If we are to resist this threat to our culture and to our lives, it is high time that we rid ourselves of the last traces of an apologetic, defensive attitude, and of the historical inhibitions which have kept us from speaking out.

The older members of our movement—men like Willie Gallacher

and S. O. Davies—always carry this strong moral conviction with them, and there is much that we can learn here from the pioneers of our movement. Recalling the effect upon him of William Morris's writings in his youth, Harry Pollitt writes in *Serving My Time*:

'There is not half enough of this type of propaganda to-day. We have all become so hard and practical that we are ashamed of painting the vision splendid—of showing glimpses of the promised land. It is missing from our speeches, our Press and our pamphlets, and if one dares to talk about the 'gleam', one is in danger of being accused of sentimentalism. Yet I am convinced it was this kind of verbal inspiration that gave birth to the indestructible urge which helped the pioneers of the movement to keep fight, fight, fighting for freedom, when it was by no means as easy as it is to-day.'

When we take the message of this Conference back to the people, let us keep the positive note in the foreground. For goodness sake, don't let us fall victims to gloom and defeatism ourselves and appal our audiences with only a catalogue of American penetrations. And don't let any of our opponents be given a chance to sneer that the Communists and their friends have found one more thing to be *against*. Let it be understood that we raise these issues because we care about our culture. Let us prove this by paying even more attention to our own history and cultural achievements, and by bringing our almost forgotten revolutionary traditions once again before the people. Let us be more aggressive in our answers to the hypocrisy of napalm-democracy. Let us always remember that it will be useless to try to resist the American threat if we can only replace it with a vacuum: and that, while we may win some local gains of a negative kind, the only lasting victories will be where—whether in scholarship, or dances-tunes, or philosophy—the American substitute is driven out by a development of the living British tradition.

Above all, let us bring back the question of Socialism before the British people. Until 1945 great sections of the British people had a fairly clear idea of the great changes in their lives which Socialism would bring. But in the last few years the Labour leaders have by their timid practice and hypocritical professions so debased the word, that now the Tory and American propagandists can caricature it by the names of 'controls' and 'bureaucracy' and so on. In place of the great proletarian values revealed in class-solidarity and militancy, we now have, even among sections of our working-class movement, the values of private living growing up—the private fears and neuroses, the self-interest and timid individualism fostered by pulp magazines and Hollywood films. We have to build that vision of Socialism over again—not only the understanding of Socialism as it already exists over one quarter of the earth, but also the vision of Socialism as it will and must come in Britain. And—since this is a cultural Conference—perhaps it may be an especial responsibility of ours to help people to understand the great changes which will take

place in their lives, in the sciences and the arts and in human relationships, within Socialism. Once again I will quote William Morris who, when he was once criticizing those 'one-sided Socialists' who ignore such changes as these, wrote:

'I hold that we need not be afraid of scaring our audiences with too brilliant pictures of the future of Society, nor think ourselves un-practical and utopian for telling them the bare truth, that in destroying monopoly we shall destroy our present civilization . . . If you tell your audiences that you are going to change so little that they will scarcely feel the change, whether you scare anyone or not, you will certainly not interest those who have nothing to hope for in the present Society, and whom the hope of a change has attracted towards Socialism . . . And certainly the Socialists who are always preaching to people that Socialism is an economic change pure and simple, are very apt to repel those who want to learn for the sake of those who do not.'

In one of his first Socialist lectures, William Morris said: 'It is to stir you up *not* to be contented with a little that I am here to-night.' That is the job we have to do. If we wish to wish to save people from the spreading taint of death, then we must win them for life. We do not wait for a new kind of person to appear until after Socialism has been won, any more than we wait for Marxism to arise within a Communist society. We must change people *now*, for that is the essence of all our cultural work. And in this work, all the forces of health within society are on our side: all those who, in whatever way, desire a richer life, all those who have warmer ambitions for Britain than those of tedious insolvency and re-armament, all those, indeed, who desire any life at all, can be won to our side if we take to them the message of life against that of the slaughter-house culture.

## THE TRADE UNIONS

NOT only is the Political Labour Party leadership in this country subservient to American political policy, but there are prominent trade union leaders who are trying to 'Americanize' British industry and the British trade unions.

Following the adoption of the Marshall Aid Plan the British Chancellor of the Exchequer suggested that 'the unions should take advantage of the Marshall Aid facilities to promote exchange of industrial techniques and ideas between Britain and America'. The Trades Union Congress General Council responded and the 'Anglo-American Council on Productivity' was formed.

Under the auspices of this council over twenty joint delegations, consisting of representatives from the employers and the trade unions in specific industries have visited the U.S.A. There has also been a team of 'specialists' to study American speed-up methods, followed by a T.U.C. delegation to study the 'system and practices' of the American trade union movement.

Some industrial delegations included rank and file members from the unions and the impressions of American industry that they got were not all pleasant. The Steel Foundry delegation visited the Ford Plant at Detroit in company with a British Press reporter. His report was headed: 'A place where men work and never smile.' He went on to say: 'These Britons studying American production methods did not like what they saw. They are craftsmen and what they saw was superb mechanization carried to its logical conclusion. The man had become a robot, skill had been taken from the job, and an imbecile could do it if he could stand the pace.'

The official report of this delegation makes the following comment on the driving forces in American industry: 'High productivity is consciously sought under the compulsion of the keenly competitive spirit which fear and self-interest have always wrought powerfully.' 'Fear of unemployment', says the report, is undoubtedly a real incitement to hard work and is sharpened for many an American worker by the consequence of his heavy hire-purchase commitments and the limitations of unemployment relief available to him.' 'At the time of the team tour,' says the Drop Forgings report, 'there were three and a half million unemployed in America and the American worker was fully aware of this and was determined to keep his job. He was also aware that if he failed to give of his best in his occupation there were others only too ready to show that they could do the job as well as, or even better than he could.' However, in the main, the reports of the industrial delegations favoured the adoption of American industrial techniques in Britain.

Concerning the T.U.C. delegation to study the American trade unions. It must be remembered that the official leadership of both the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. is to-day thoroughly reactionary in the political sense. Therefore it is not surprising to find in the British T.U.C. delegation report that the outstanding points in American trade union practices to-day can be summed up as follows:

- (1) They are anti-Socialist. They support the system of private enterprise, i.e., capitalism. They believe in the personal profit motive, and the unions actually give financial assistance to companies that are in economic difficulties.
- (2) They believe in co-operation with the employers on production efficiency. Some unions provide industrial consultants to help employers in the reorganization of production methods.
- (3) There is no resistance to the principle by the trade unions to Time and Motion Study, a system which has for its purpose reducing the worker to a robot.
- (4) There is no opposition to labour-saving machinery or speed-up, even though it results in making workers redundant.
- (5) In regard to wage agreements: there are very few national agreements, they are mainly union-company agreements.

All this is unadulterated class-collaboration. According to the delegation report this was frankly stated by a president of one of the American unions in the following terms: 'Labour realizes that Labour has got to get together with the management in the general interest of all. We do not believe in fighting the management, but in compromise.'

How did the British delegation view this policy? The answer is contained in their own report as follows: 'It seemed to the team that the relations between employers and employees are on a sound basis in the United States . . . suspicion seemed to be largely absent and frank discussion could take place. The profit motive is viewed without suspicion. The team drew from these conditions the conclusion that increased mutual confidence between employee and employer must assuredly lead to higher productivity. It is recommended that greater confidence between management and workers at all levels be encouraged by all possible means.'

In the delegation report a series of recommendations to the British trade unions are made which include the following:

- (1) The British unions should seek to co-operate in the application of scientific management.
- (2) Seek to increase production efficiency through a greater use of the mechanical aids and the application of Time and Motion Study.
- (3) Establish machinery for the payment of compensation for a limited period to workpeople made redundant by technological advance.

- (4) Unions should establish production engineering departments and train production engineers.
- (5) Unions should be prepared to give technical advice and assistance to firms whose profit margins are falling.
- (6) We should invite production engineering and research officers from the American trade unions to lecture in British trade unions on their union's activities in production.
- (7) We should obtain for distribution in the British unions American trade union literature dealing with production engineering and union activities.

There is a high-powered propaganda drive now being made in this country by the 'Right-wing' trade union leaders to instil American ideas into the British movement. If their policy is carried through it would fundamentally change the character of our trade unions. It would transform them from independent organs of struggle against capitalist exploitation into appendages of the capitalist system for the defeat of Socialism.

The arguments of the American and British reactionary trade union leaders are different, but they share the same aim. The American leader says that efficient capitalism is the workers' salvation. That private enterprise is his ideal; whilst the British leader advocates co-operation with the employers in the pretence that this is the British brand of Socialism.

The real aim of both such leaders is to destroy the class-struggle spirit of the workers and defeat the revolutionary aspirations of the working class for political and economic power.

The rank and file workers must discuss these proposals of the Right-wing leaders in the union branches and in the factories and give full expression to their determination to prevent this betrayal of the British trade union movement.

## SCIENCE

IN his fine opening statement Sam Aaronovitch mentioned the names of some of the great men who founded the great heritage of British science. We have the duty of developing and extending that heritage in order to increase man's control over nature and to extend the scope and power of rational thought.

This means that we must remember, and continue, the struggles they fought to add their contributions to the truth. This task has always confronted us, but to-day it has a new urgency, because to the distorting and frustrating influence of British imperialism has been added that of American imperialism.

There are a number of features which, though not all specifically American, yet taken together add up to a picture of American science which is antipathetic to British scientists: (a) the use of dollars as a substitute for thought, as in the 'buying' of prominent scientists from Europe; (b) pre-occupation with techniques and elaborate and expensive apparatus, sometimes sinking to a ludicrous display with nothing behind it; (c) over-organization, as shown in excessive administration and crude statistical attitudes to achievement; (d) rapacity, shown in an eagerness to lift other people's ideas, anxiety about priority in publication and great concern with secrecy.

These features of the working of American science, combined with the dominance of pragmatism and the political domination of aggressive monopoly capital, produce certain characteristic results: (a) a shortage of ideas of any kind is a defect of American science, recognized by its own official leaders, e.g. Smythe; (b) such characteristic ideas as do emerge are characteristically anti-scientific and anti-humanist, e.g. the gene theory, eugenics, neo-Malthusianism; (c) the outstanding successes are in the field of destruction, especially the destruction of human beings.

We have to keep these trends from establishing themselves in British science. To do this we must study carefully the development of British science and learn to distinguish the progressive trends and the influence of reactionary thought (e.g. Malthus's population theory in Darwinism). We must study and expose the influence of monopoly capitalism in science, especially the militarization of science. We must fight reactionary theories and develop that form of activity which has played such an important part in the development of all true science—controversy.

As the defence of British science becomes more and more clearly a defence against American domination, a great field of work for progressive scientists opens up, because of the widespread and healthy dislike of American distortions of science.

## AGRICULTURE

I WISH to speak about agriculture and in particular to refer to the theories of over-population mentioned in the report. In order to prop up their system the capitalists must once more pedal the Malthusian theory of over-population and this is done by the American agriculturist—Voigt, in his book ‘The Road to Survival’. These theories are, of course, useful to the capitalist when trying to justify war and too many workers believe them. How many times when canvassing in elections do we hear the argument that ‘if it were not for wars the world would starve’ or that ‘if it had not been for the First World War killing off thousands of men the unemployment situation of the inter-war years would have been even worse’?

What is it these upholders of the theory of over-population say? They say that if man doesn’t reduce the world population by wars then nature will intervene with earthquakes and famines!

What we, as Communists, have got to explain to the people is that these theories all tie up with the capitalist system and with the capitalist attitude to food production. Capitalist food production thrives on shortages whereas abundance creates a ‘crisis’ for capitalists. When *nature* doesn’t reduce the quantity of food the capitalists do by destroying it! But at the same time the agricultural theories and policies of the capitalist countries are based on the idea that it is impossible to feed the world’s population, that it is impossible to ‘defeat nature’, etc. Revolutionary theories, such as Lysenko’s, are repudiated because if practised they would create abundance and abundance means *ruin* for capitalist farmers.

We all know of the wilful destruction of food that has taken place in the past, but we should not fail to point out that this country—America—which professes ‘aid to backward territories’ even to-day destroys crops to create artificial shortages. In 1949 the American Agricultural Department paid farmers to plough in every third row of cotton because there was ‘too much cotton’. This did not mean that all who needed clothes had them, but it did mean higher profits for the farmers and the dealers. However, the American mules were more sensible than their masters for they refused to trample on every third row of cotton when for years they had been in the habit of walking between the rows.

The rising prices and low living standards of the capitalist world are blamed on ‘world shortages’ and yet whenever Russia offers to put millions of bushels of wheat into the International Wheat Pool the capitalist countries cry ‘No’. This would bring down their profits. This would reduce their power to gain control of other countries in return for bread. You can see why any idea that the increasing population of the world can be fed is dangerous to the capitalists and why

they must therefore plug these old over-population theories along with the rest of their culture.

We as Communists have an important task to combat these theories and all the reactionary ideas that spring from them. Let us kill these shortage arguments by showing that world shortages are artificial, created by the capitalists. Let us expose the idea that America wishes to 'aid' other countries. If she really wanted to help other countries she would increase food production at home and send food to under-fed countries without any political strings attached to the deal.

Look at China. Here is a country just risen from its knees and struggling under a terrific burden and yet she is able to send thousands of tons of grain to starving India without any lengthy negotiations or political strings. Contrast this with America, who will not send grain until she is assured of a grip on India in return. We must expose this sort of thing not only at cultural conferences but in our trade union branches, in the workshops and on the doorsteps.

We Communists must more and more popularize the achievements of the Soviet Union where they have discarded these old theories of over-population and where they are not waiting for favours from nature but are wresting them from her. With agricultural policies based on Lysenko's theory they are harnessing nature and changing it. The great Volga-Don Canal scheme and other irrigation schemes, planting of hundreds of miles of shelter belts and electrification of agricultural processes will bring millions of acres of land into cultivation. Contrast this with America where, according to Voigt, thousands of acres of land go out of cultivation each year as a result of poaching of fertility by capitalist methods of farming.

In this cultural battle we Communists have an important task to counteract these reactionary theories with the positive achievements of the new socialist countries. We must make greater use of books and papers about the Soviet Union such as *Soviet Union*, *Soviet Weekly* and books like *Peoples' Academy*, *Advancing to Communism* and, of course, the *Daily Worker*.

When once the British people understand the achievements of the Socialist countries they will quickly reject the American culture of 'hopelessness' with its theories of 'death'.

## LITERATURE

MY own contribution is meant to be about the nature of our reply to the American threat to culture.

Lenin said there are times when 'literature becomes pornography'. This is one of them. But consider what the phrase means. Pornography is writing about sex: but writing about sex always has been, and I imagine always will be, an important part of literature. The difference is that pornography is writing about sex by and for men and women who are utterly lonely. It is the symptom of social breakdown and loneliness. So are the things that go with it, giving up the hope of beauty and putting in its place glamour, giving up music and putting in its place jazz (and then calling it a strong working class tradition). And with this goes a loss of the taste for the wine of the country, the discovery that English writing and English beer, or Scottish writing and export ale, are insipid compared with coca-cola and Dashniell Hamnett.

The disease is social and the cure has to be social too. My first point is that this should mean a closer tie-up between literature, art and our movement than has ever happened before in our political experience.

This is the second time we have faced an American threat to our culture though in certain ways the earlier one was more serious, and we beat it back. I mean during the 'thirties when the Hollywood domination was almost complete and we almost allowed ourselves to be persuaded that Britain was culturally down and out—even the language had gone with the Encyclopædia to U.S.A. This was a dangerous threat because we almost gave in. For instance, there was no question in the 'thirties about thinking Hollywood feature films were better than ours. Everybody knew they were. There has been a great change in our own lifetime. Let's encourage ourselves that much.

But the present American attack differs from the earlier one. In the 'thirties we let ourselves be half persuaded that the Americans were young and tough and we were old and soft. What this meant was something important, e.g. that in the U.S. strikes were fought with tear-gas and here by Transport House—a different level of development. The fact that our answer to our own situation had to have brains as well as muscle did not mean that it was less 'gutsy' than the American, and we proved this during the war. The present attack is not, so to speak, on our self-confidence but on our bodies. The means are much cruder. Stockpiling of sulphur to put us economically out of business is paralleled by stockpiling paper or filmstock to put us culturally out of business.

Writers have the curious distinction of being the first section I know

of to be told by their employers—in this case their publishers—that because costs of production are going up, wages—in this case royalties—must not simply be frozen but go down. This particular economic attack began demonstrably in U.S.A. I hope we shall fight it to the last ditch. I hope we may beat it. But it is an interesting phenomenon because it can't on the whole be explained in economic terms at all. It can only be explained by the half-expressed thought of the coca-colonizers that writers in any case will be a nuisance and ought to be silenced *en bloc*.

The threat to our culture is as definite as a physical occupation of the country. It is symbolized perhaps by the fact that Mr. Luce has been given permits to erect a *Time* and *Life* headquarters in Bond Street. And, as usual, just as we have seen in film and will see in publishing, we have seen Mr. Hulton of *Picture Post* carefully bumping himself off beforehand so that Mr. Luce won't have the trouble. This is the form collaboration will now take.

About a year and a half ago the Soviet writer Alexei Surkov was in London and something he said in conversation with a dozen or so English writers sticks in my mind. He said, 'Is it possible to revive the tradition of the 'thirties in English writing?' I remembered this because the 'thirties are now supposed to be so unfashionable. At the time we replied, 'No, not yet.' I think a year and a half ago we were right to say no. But we would be wrong if we said it to-day.

In the mid-1930's within a few months the following things happened. *Left Review* was founded, the Artists' International Association was started, so were Unity Theatre, *New Writing*, the Left Book Club and a writers' association which later became part of the big international movement of writers against fascism.

In the same way I think the present moment calls for what President Roosevelt during the New Deal called 'priming the pump'. We don't propose to take over British culture, but the pump needs priming. If we leave it entirely to private enterprise the Americans will take over British culture. But there's a reasonable chance that in the 'fifties, as in the 'thirties, pump-priming may make all the difference.

*Jack Lindsay*

## PUBLISHING

I MEAN to deal with the economic effect of U.S.A. imperialism on our publishing world, on our writers and readers.

The last year or so has seen a rapid approximation of the structure of British publishing to that of the States. Concentration of capital in a few hands, high overhead expenses, disregard of cultural standards and an all-out effort for the best-seller, the drastic commercialization and degeneration of the best-seller itself. These are the primary marks of the U.S.A. system. Under it a publisher must get a certain amount of best-sellers or go under, and the best-seller is tied up with the needs of Hollywood, since ordinary book sales are insufficient. The book must be taken up by one of the low-level book clubs or a Hollywood magnate; and thus it must be a work of maximum vulgarity, pandering to themes of violence and sex-mania.

Things are not anywhere near as bad as that yet in Britain. But last year Sir Stanley Unwin, the most outstanding figure in our publishing world, called attention to the danger, pointing out that if the U.S.A. system went further in its imposition here, serious publishing would crash. The P.E.N. Club, at its yearly Congress, passed a resolution against the trend, and held a dinner for publishers and authors to discuss ways of dealing with it. We see the result already in the crisis of the smaller publisher. Liberal firms like Lindsay Drummond have had to close down, others are tottering on the brink, trying to vulgarize their programme for survival, and competing to import U.S.A. successes.

The present best-sellers in Britain fall into two categories: Escape Stories, accentuating the middle-class feeling of being lost, with a daydream of a lucky personal escape from a hopeless situation. And the boosted works of reaction, biographies of Nazi Generals, diaries of Nazi soldiers, studies of traitors, Kravchenkos, and the like, some born of our own reactionary forces, some imitating U.S.A. successes, but more and more direct importations. If counter-steps are not taken, in a year or so the degraded system of U.S.A. big business publishing will have gained something like complete control of our publishing world.

This trend, with the scarcity of paper and its high price, are the direct results of submission to U.S.A. war policy. The cut in authors' royalties, started in the U.S.A., carries the attack right into the author's own business and bosom.

On all these matters a broad front can be established. My citation of Sir Stanley Unwin and the P.E.N. exemplify this. All the professional organizations of the authors and the book trade can be drawn into the fight. The President of the News Print Society (in *World Press News*) has declared that if the trade can't get paper from the U.S.A., we must nationally look elsewhere, i.e. the U.S.S.R. And the Society of Industrial Artists is arranging a symposium on the matter.

And to turn to the broader issues, we have seen a few days ago the Peace Appeal signed by twelve leading writers; and around which already a Peace Movement among writers is developing.

But while stressing the need for this broad fight, we must recognize particular responsibilities of our own. A simple technique of reactionary control in an industry is to gain hold of the distributive side, block all approaches to the public, and then take over production. Rank did it in the cinema. On the distributive side in books, there is a solid obstruction against the left, against the peace-forces, against anything strongly progressive or versus U.S.A. imperialism. Though not centrally organized, it works as a virtual boycott.

The General Report mentioned a Battle of the Books. This is essential if we are to consolidate the position of progressive literature in Britain. Here we can draw on the experience of our French comrades, who have been waging such a battle for over a year. We must break through the obstructions to direct contact with the workers, the people.

We need to organize exhibitions of books, book-festivals, which will include all good and progressive and genuinely British books of to-day. In the main towns, the industrial towns, in factories, even in the countryside; in association with Trades Councils, Co-operatives, any section of the peace movement, any progressive organization ready to help. These exhibitions can be given interest and impact by talks and discussions; by authors signing their books and participating in discussion on the national tradition, on the people and culture, and so on.

Local libraries can be built up out of the battle—in factories or any suitable grouping. Such libraries can in turn be made discussion centres. No other way can we offset the heavy rise in book prices which has already made books inaccessible to the workers and large sections of the middle-class. Thus, too, we can lay the basis for a progressive Book Club which will carry on the second stage of the Battle.

All this may sound too ambitious. But it can be carried on in sections, as with our French comrades. They began with a big centre like Marseilles, and then just kept on. (There they had the luck to open just as a dock strike broke out, and the Battle of Books helped the strike a bit, and the strike helped the Battle a lot. That's the kind of give-and-take we want to see.)

This strategy does not contradict the broad front. On the contrary, it would give it the necessary drive. A Battle of the Books would have a strong effect on publishers and the distributive book trade, and on writers too. The situation is now too grave for us just to look on. The rallying of a broad front of writers, publishers, readers is needed to fight the effects of the war-policy and the U.S.A. occupation, and the influx of bad American stuff. And at the same time the development of our forms for bringing books to the people.

Together, these steps can reverse the present trend. Speaking for the Writers' Group, I want to say that we are ready to play our full part in this resistance, this struggle to carry on and develop our true national tradition.

*Rose Grant*

## THE NEWSPAPERS

ON the basis of a report compiled by a number of Communist journalists I want to tell you how, particularly in the past five years, American imperialism has gained a hold over the British press, the methods used and the results achieved. It is not a pretty story. Neither is it a sensational story. But it is one for which all honest journalists—and indeed every man and woman concerned for the independence of our country and for the peace of the world—should be ashamed. It is a story that must be changed.

Perhaps the supreme example of American penetration of British culture as it affects our press is the cultivation of quotation marks round the word 'peace', that naughty word whose propagation is becoming a criminal offence.

With the sole exception of the *Daily Worker*, every daily newspaper supports the American drive to a third world war. This state of affairs both reflects and fosters British subservience to American imperialism. It is not only an effect but also a cause. Its aim is to prepare the minds of our people first for the cold war and then for the hot war, the ugly war against Socialism.

To understand how this has come about one must first look at the background and structure of the British press.

In the nineteenth century our press was a medium, and a most important medium, through which reforms could be fought for, corruption and chicanery exposed. The period rings with the names of Delaine of the *Times*, Richard Carlisle, Hetherington, Dickens and other journalists dedicated to a free and independent press in the service of progress. But the press, like other industries, pursued its development towards monopoly. And at the turn of the century the Northcliffe Revolution opened the floodgates for the cheap, sensational journalism which to-day engulfs millions upon millions of men and women, young and old. In the hands of a small group of Press Lords—milords Kemsley, Beaverbrook, Rothermere, Layton and a few 'commoners' lies the control of all the popular newspapers with their gigantic readerships. Backed by huge advertisement revenue, the owning of newspapers—except, for the time being, for the *Daily Worker* co-operative owners—is a hugely profitable occupation.

You remember Baldwin's acid comment on the capitalist press monopolists, 'power without responsibility—the prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages'.

Naturally enough when the Labour Government came to power at the end of World War II the American way of life, 'free enterprise', 'untrammeled competition' and all that, became the hope of the British Tories and their allies, the press lords. Fleet Street stopped peddling pure British capitalism, and took up its theme song, *The Yanks Are Coming*.

With the arrival of the Marshall Plan and E.C.A. this function of the British press, including the *Daily Herald*, was blessed as a holy crusade. The cold war had started in earnest. Fleet Street was the front line. The U.S. ambassador Lewis Douglas got cracking. British press proprietors were plied with lunches, dinners, cocktail parties, quiet chats. After them in all the big newspaper offices the word went round: 'The old man says...'

What it amounted to was: Play down anti-American stories; more yarns about the way Americans do things; no stories about anti-Yank feeling in the occupied areas of East Anglia or Lancashire; watch what the American press is saying, then take it from there.

The Embassy ran a series of press conferences for senior executives. Diplomatic correspondents, military, industrial, agricultural, City correspondents, news editors and other Big Boys were—and still are—extravagantly wined, dined and primed.

As Humbert Wolfe put it a few years ago:

You cannot hope to bribe or twist  
Thank God! the British journalist  
But seeing what the man will do  
Unbribed, there's no occasion to.

Then there is Bill Gaussman, of the Labour and Industrial Department of the U.S. Embassy, who has made it his job to become close buddies with most of the top-line industrial correspondents. Visits to the U.S.A. are assiduously encouraged. At this moment a delegation of twenty key men from our provincial newspaper offices are 'over there'. Before they left, the new U.S. ambassador—whose wife on the Giffords' arrival in London promptly called a woman's press conference—gave the twenty provincial missionaries a send-off party. They intend to see what can be done to 'improve communications between the U.S.A. and Britain. Truman, it is reported, is ready to receive them.

In addition to the 'personal touch' the U.S. Embassy pours out a boundless flow of hand-outs to daily, provincial and suburban news-desks, glorifying Truman America, its home and foreign affairs. It sends out regularly copies of the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Herald Tribune*, etc. When a suburban London editor phoned the Embassy for the reason he was told that they were 'informative and educational'.

Expense, of course, is nothing to worry about. On 11th March this year the *Sunday Pictorial* reported a new U.S. State Department drive to win the world's admiration for the American way of life. At that date the American propaganda army abroad numbered 3,633, of whom 579 were Americans and the rest foreigners in the pay of the U.S. Government. The intention was to raise those figures to 5,080 and 1,056, with the Americans holding the key jobs.

The same report, which came from John Walters, in New York, said that for the fiscal year ending 30th June the State Department alone would have spent £40 million on propaganda (this compares

with about £4 million spent yearly by the British Foreign Office on overseas propaganda). Whether the ambassadorial wooing is paid for out of the £40 million is not known.

Then there is the pooling of news services, which got off to a quick start, after the American invasion of North Korea. In the scramble, American military correspondents were hired by some of our mass circulation dailies. In addition the *Daily Express* pooled its news service with that of the *New York Times*. It exchanges articles with the *Denver Post*, Colorado, as does *The Scotsman*. It is just now opening its columns to an American music critic, its guest writer. The *Daily Mail* runs regular feature articles by Walter Lippmann, the *Evening Standard* gets its Yankee angle from Emily Hahn, the *Evening News* from Eileen Travis, the *Star* from Ivy Powell. A number of provincial papers have been adopted by small towns in America.

One other method of infiltration into the daily press is the abundant use of strip cartoons—dope injected the nice-easy way. Here the *Daily Mirror* merits a Purple Heart!

When we come to the magazine and periodical section of the press, it is more a story of commercial transactions, the syndication of Yankee articles and pictures on an alarming scale.

*Picture Post* and *Illustrated* buy features direct from the American magazines *Life* and *Look*; *John Bull* buys from the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Coloured photographs, Kodachromes, are bought from the U.S. in large quantities. Camera Clix, an American agency, in this country, sells them at £20 or £30 a time.

To swell the American invasion there are the American publishing firms that put out English editions: *Vogue*, *Harpers*, *Bazaar*, *Time*, and a large number of trade papers.

The consequences of all these methods are evident not only in the contents of our press—the servility to Wall Street America, the frantic, incessant outpouring of anti-Soviet poison, the strident war-incitement—but also in journalist technique.

The way the news is obtained, for instance. You remember the brutalized elaborations of the story of how a former G.I. kidnapped his child from a London home. Commenting on this in a speech in the Commons last November, Labour M.P. Mr. G. E. Wigg said: 'Some of the gangster methods employed in American journalism are beginning to permeate into British news presentation.'

Or the way pressmen hounded the fifteen-year-old schoolgirl who had got signatures to the Ban the Atom Bomb petition.

Another aspect of the American threat to British culture gravely affecting the British press is the Yankee hoarding of newsprint. With only six per cent. of the world's population, the U.S.A. consumes or stockpiles seventy per cent. of the world's total newsprint production. Before the war Britain led the world in newsprint consumption per head of the population. Now we have fallen to the tenth place.

Journalists who refuse to toe the boss's Yankee line in Britain have

been sacked—Herbert Gunn of the *Evening Standard* and Tom Hopkinson of *Picture Post*. Others to their honour have walked out of their jobs in protest, for instance James Cameron from *Picture Post*.

But within the profession the burden of the fight against American *gleich-schaltung* must fall on the National Union of Journalists with its 11,000 membership. The fight is being waged—though not with the vigour and the success that the situation requires—and it will go on and gain strength.

At the N.U.J. annual delegate meeting last month a resolution which pointed to the need for international friendship and urged journalists to play their part in lessening world-tension, was defeated by the narrow vote of 57 to 54. Another resolution amendment which deplored the ‘pornography and trivia’ on which so much of our precious newsprint is wasted was also defeated by a tiny majority.

Our union is pressing for the establishment of a Press Council and has set up an Ethics Committee.

Prominent Fleet Street journalists are turning their attention to the question of the press and world peace.

We Communist journalists wish to stress the need for more written and spoken exposures of the American threat to the culture of our country.

More articles, more pamphlets for the men and women in the organized Labour movement, for the housewife and for professional workers.

The British people have been and are proud of their country's independence, now so tragically in decline.

To end the threat of the Yankee marauders in our cultural life means to win back that independence and participate in safeguarding the peace of the world.

## CHILDREN'S READING

THE Streamline American Comic, British Edition, is new to our country. It was unknown before the war. As a teacher I have watched the growth of its influence over the past three years. Its influence is considerable, especially among boys aged eleven-fifteen. It is the sole reading matter for many adolescents, and we have the authority of *The Times* for saying that these comic strip magazines form the only reading matter for the American troops in Korea. Lest we should feel superior, we should note that Army padres in B.A.O.R. state that young British soldiers spend most of their Sundays on their beds reading American comics.

They are bought more by boys in Secondary Modern schools than by boys in Grammar schools, probably because little reading ability is necessary for their assimilation. The degree of concentration shown by children reading them is very marked, especially when one remembers that these are the children who find extreme difficulty in concentrating on anything else. Readership per copy is high, and I know many boys who keep stacks of these comics at home, thumbing them through over and over again, and swapping them as we used to swap cigarette cards.

So, noting that American-type comics are profitable to their publishers, and that their popularity is increasing, let's have a look at a typical example, entitled *Guns*. There are thirty-six pages of full colour—and what colour!—with five full-length scenarios. Two are Wild West stories, and I have no particular quarrel with them except that they are vulgar without being funny, and make a fetish of guns. The other three are about gangsters in Chicago and other characters from America's sporting life, such as Charles 'Pretty Boy' Floyd, who committed five murders, all of which are graphically portrayed, as is his own violent death at the hands of the police. Altogether there are thirty-five murders in these thirty-six pages, which are published by the Anglo-American Book Co. Ltd., by arrangement with a Mr. Schwartz, of East 42nd Street, New York—and printed by the Co-operative Wholesale Society, Stockport. We might point out to these gentlemen that they would be better employed cleaning up their own back garden than expelling Communists.

Of course, it would be unfair to infer that the American-type comic deals solely in murder. These magazines, which boast of spreading the American way of life throughout the globe, also deal in sadism, whippings, torture, and a rather vulgar form of visual pornography—if one must distinguish between various forms of pornography.

Comics stress cruelty. Tortures are popular and foreigners—Japs, Germans and Jews—are the villains. Or rather they were until recently, for the latest copy to reach me shows that the real villains,

as one might expect, are Russians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Czechs and Chinese. We must look forward to the day when Englishmen are added to this list.

Comics glorify power. In nearly all the crime comics, the hero is invulnerable—in the Superman type, he is also superior to all physical laws. These comics encourage escape from the problems of life to day dreams.

Comics portray fantasies of the future, all fascist in character and conception, in that society is ruled by a benevolent dictator, or perhaps an evil dictator who is in the end vanquished and killed horribly, not because he is a *dictator*, but because he is a *bad* dictator.

Though there have been one or two progressive comics in America, I have never seen a decent wholesome idea in one of these American-type comics printed in England. This is odd, because you would think one would creep in here and there if only by accident.

The lessons that are constantly reiterated are that human nature is aggressive and ruthless—even if on the side of justice. That somewhere is concealed a fairy Supermother in modern dress, who will solve all our problems for us, so we won't have to do it ourselves. And the final lesson is that what is most desirable in life is what the hero possesses—power which eliminated the need for effort, riches, fame and publicity—and, of course, a female body with oddly-shaped bumps protruding from it in all directions.

There are two main defences of the comic strip. The first is expressed by the *Times Educational Supplement* in its own inimitable way:

'Children are more tough-minded than their solicitous seniors often imagine. They thrive on intellectual fodder that would nauseate a grown-up. They can consume comic strips with the same avidity as jam puffs before breakfast, and fastidious guardians are inclined to register horror at both feats.'

In other words, 'You're worrying too much: we had our penny bloods when we were kids and look at us now.' Passing over the obvious retort, let me mention the second defence, which is that of the pseudo-psychological—that comic strips act as 'vicarious outlets for aggression'.

The first line of defence boils down to the argument that what a child reads has no effect on him. There is only time here to comment briefly that this is hardly in line with educational theory and practice—and as for the 'vicarious outlet' mumbo-jumbo, it is precisely those people who feel no repugnance at dropping petrol-jelly bombs on villages containing women and children who are most avid readers of comic strips. These young men must have been conditioned to these atrocities somehow—and I suggest that comic strips justifying violence and brutality must have been a considerable factor in this conditioning process.

To sum up—the influence of these comic strip magazines is increasing, and their content is objectionable and dangerous to any minds,

but particularly to young and impressionable minds. Like the typical American film, the comic strip drugs the mind and acts as a depressant even when it appears to excite. Its appeal is to blind prejudice and hysteria. The ideas, the plots, the language, the scenes, the clothing—all are American; the America of Jim Crow and the lynch law, of the F.B.I. and Al Capone, and of the Committee for un-American Activities.

Children and adolescents who read comic strips regularly must grow to accept certain conclusions that are remorselessly hammered home—that Americans are a super race—that people who are not Americans are certainly inferior, and if not inhabitants of an Atlantic Pact country, certainly evil—that all coloured people are either simple and comic or cunning and evil—that killing your enemies is the best possible employment—and in fact that the way to get and preserve justice is to shoot everyone who opposes you.

Hitler's Nazis had to debauch the minds of Germany's youth before sending them to burn, kill, and destroy throughout Europe. The same process is being carried out in America: the proof is in Korea. We must not allow the same thing to happen to our youth, to allow them to be softened up to be willing, unthinking cannon-fodder. We must throw off this dangerous drug before it takes an unbreakable hold on our children and young people.

And this brings me to the final point—what to do about it. Most adults have never perused a comic strip magazine carefully—indeed it is a most difficult and distasteful task unless one has been conditioned to it. But please do make a note to buy or get hold of one somehow *and read it thoroughly*. When you have done this, if you really love children, if you really care what happens to their minds, if you have any thought for the future of this country—you'll be so hopping mad that all sorts of actions will occur to you. And there are so many things that can and should be done to arouse people to the menace of this filth that is beginning to occupy the minds of our children more unobtrusively, but just as surely, as our country is being physically occupied. It is by appealing to the best instincts of ordinary decent people that we can stop this American vulgarization, this degradation, this perversion, of our young people.

*Ralph Bond*

## FILMS

**I**N no field of artistic endeavour is American penetration so obvious as in the case of films. Neither is this a recent process. Hollywood captured the British film industry as long ago as 1915, and it has never loosened its grip since.

Of course, no serious endeavour has ever been made to loosen the grip, either by the film trade itself or by Governments, be they Conservative, Liberal or Labour. The film trade is perfectly content with things as they are. The big money is in cinemas, and cinema profits have always been kept rolling by an endless supply of American films, obtainable at cheaper prices than British films. The Labour Government has done nothing to bring about that complete structural change of the industry which is essential before an independent British film production industry can have a hope of survival, let alone expansion.

The complete subordination of British films to Hollywood, brought about by the failure of the Government to take up the challenge, is symptomatic of wider political policies. An indication of the contempt which so-called progressive politicians have towards the cultural interests of the nation.

It is significant and encouraging that it is the workers in the industry who are seriously making the fight for the preservation of British films, and making it not purely on the grounds of employment, but on the wider issue that the country can no longer tolerate seventy per cent. of its film entertainment being permanently imported from Hollywood.

This fight to save the British film industry, and the policy programme adopted by the Unions, deserves the widest possible aid. In the first place it is necessary to win the support of the millions of Trade Unionists, to show them what is happening, to convince them that this question affects them too and not only the workers in the film industry. The enthusiastic and unanimous support that has already been won from the two largest Trades Councils, London and Manchester, is proof that the workers understand the issue when it is squarely put before them. The organized Trade Union and Co-operative movements could make a tremendous contribution towards building a progressive film movement in this country.

The Labour movement on the whole has been content to leave this enormous power of persuasion entirely in capitalist hands. Only a handful of Trade Unions have sponsored films on their own work and achievements, and most of the Co-operative film activity is restricted to advertising their products.

Think of the great themes concerning our Labour movement that would make wonderful films: the birth and progress of the Co-operatives; the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs; the Peasants Revolt; and

so on. If the Unions and the Co-operatives with their enormous resources would finance a few films like this we could break the commercial stranglehold of the monopolies, and challenge the dominance of Hollywood.

There are other things that can be done. Progressive Film Societies like *New Era* can be developed all over the country. Only a relative handful of people have seen the fine films made by progressive groups in France, Italy, America and other capitalist countries. Only a very small number have seen the new films from the Soviet Union, China, Czechoslovakia, and the other People's Democracies. We should extend the showing of these films by all possible means, such as the direct exhibition in Trade Union branches, in factories, and by forming progressive Film Clubs.

On a small scale it should be possible to make some progressive films ourselves. A start has been made with *May Day*. No effort is too small or without its influence.

Our task is not simply to agitate against the vicious and corrupt influence of so many Hollywood films. That is important, but side by side must go the fight to ensure that our people see the best works of film art from all countries, and above all to create an independent and healthy British film industry.

In doing this don't let us get confused or side-tracked. We don't say: Sooner a bad British film than a bad American film. Of course we must criticize bad British films, and oppose the Hollywood influence that is affecting too many of our film makers. The real issue is not whether we should make or should not make *Old Mother Rileys*, but whether there is to be a British film industry at all.

In taking our stand on this issue we can actively raise the other question, the quality of our films, their themes and content, the making of progressive films, the question of a better service to the public giving them the right to see the best films from all countries, which in itself means a campaign against the monopolies who control the main sources of exhibition and distribution.

By actively exerting ourselves on all these questions, and by winning the broadest support from the mass of the people, we shall be well on the road towards gaining a British film industry that will be worthy of the cultural and artistic heritage and traditions of our country.

## I TAKE MY STAND

THE world is astonished at recent developments in the United States. Our actions and attitudes are discussed with puzzled wonder on the streets of every city in the world. Reluctantly the world is coming to believe that we actually want war; that we must have war; that in no other way can we keep our workers employed and maintain huge profits save by spending seventy thousand million dollars a year for war preparation and adding to the vast debt of over 200 thousand millions which we already owe chiefly for war in the past.

Our present war expenditure must be increased, yet we cannot tax the rich much more since the lawyers who make the tax laws can also break them and let the bulk of wealth go untaxed. We cannot raise the taxes on the poor much higher because rising prices leave less and less to tax. Citizens have borrowed 200 thousand million dollars on homes, farms and furniture, and the poor and middle class have spent nearly all their savings. Yet we cannot stop; either we spend more and more on top of what we are spending or our whole industrial organization, with its billions of private profit monopoly, will face collapse.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union whom we are determined to destroy does not at present seem willing to fight. We have warned and dared it. We have publicly and privately insulted it. We have eagerly given currency to every charge which anyone at any time makes against the Soviet Union, its economy, its morals, its plans. We thought that at last in Korea we had them where they must fight and we prepared jauntily for World War III almost with shouts of joy.

We were sure the Russians had started the Korean uprising, were furnishing arms and ready to march to war. Henry Wallace actually saw them and ran backwards so fast that he tripped over his own resolutions, and stepped in the faces of his friends. Still the Soviets did not fight and began instead to call for world peace; for union against the atom bomb; for peace congresses. But the United States was not misled; not they. They stopped the peace appeal. They picked up and jailed advocates of peace. They barred from our shores foreign advocates of peace, persons of the highest reputation.

Highly placed public officials and military men began openly to declare that if the Russians would not attack us, we would attack them to keep them from attacking us. The Wild Man of Tokyo, who remembers shooting down World War I veterans in Washington, and who is turning Korea into a stinking desert, has received the President of the United States in audience. Whatever they talk about, the result, if MacArthur has his way, was not peace now or ever; until we seize China, conquer south-east Asia and drop atom bombs on Moscow.

Meantime, wave after wave of our young men are being trained for murder, and Congress is on the verge of calling every youth in the land for this purpose.

This is what Europe sees us set for, in contradiction to everything we once professed—liberty, free speech, truth and justice. To this our masters will lead us unless you intervene: unless right here and now you, the people of the United States, say No! Enough of this hysteria, this crazy foolishness!

Our slow but steady descent into belief in complete and universal war and our determination to make all men agree with what some believe, rather than to let them exercise their free American heritage of choosing truth—this literal descent into Hell in our day, and in this our own country, has been so gradual and complete that many honest Americans cannot believe what they actually hear and see; and sit bewildered, rubbing their eyes in order to get some vague conception of what can have happened to the land which once declared ‘These truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they were endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’

No American born before 1900 could possibly conceive that the United States would become a land approaching universal military service; with its armed forces in every continent and on every sea; pledged to conquer and control masses of mankind, order the thought and belief of the nations of the world, and ready to spend for these objects more money than it ever spent for religion, education or social uplift altogether.

When men arise and say this and try to prove its truth, every effort is made by secret police, organized spies and hired informers; by deliberate subversion of the fundamental principles of our law, to imprison, slander and silence such persons, and deprive them of earning an honest livelihood.

Avoiding all hysteria and exaggeration, all natural indignation and instinctive defence of the right of free speech and hatred of thought control, it is clear to all Americans who still dare to think, that my description of this America is true, and if true, frightening to all men who once thought of this land as the Land of the Free.

My platform then, like the platform of every honest American who still dares believe in peace and freedom, takes its unalterable stand against war and slavery. There was a day when most men believed that progress depended on war; that by war, and mainly by war, had modern men gained freedom, religion and democracy. We believed this because we were taught this in our literature and science, in church and school, on platform and in newspaper. It was always a lie and as war has become universal and so horrible and destructive that everybody recognizes it as murder, crippling, insanity and stark death of human culture, we realize that there is scarce a victory formerly claimed by war which mankind might not have gained more cheaply and more decently and even more completely by methods of peace. If that was true in the past, it is so clear and indisputable to-day that

no sane being denies it. And yet of all nations of earth to-day, the United States alone wants war, prepares for war, forces other nations to fight and asks you and me to impoverish ourselves, give up health and schools, sacrifice our sons and daughters to a Jim-Crow army, and commit suicide, for a world war that nobody wants but the rich Americans who profit by it.

If war were a matter of careful study and grave decision, of prayerful thought and solemn deliberation, we might take its fearful outbreak as at least no more than human error, soon to be stopped by decency and common sense. But when did you ever vote for war? You who have spent most of your lives in a fighting, murdering world? When did you ever have a chance to decide this matter of maiming and murder? Never! And you never will as long as an executive of his own initiative can start a 'little police action' which costs the lives and health of over 50,000 American boys, in order that big business can interfere with the governments of Asia.

Of what are we in such deathly fear? Have we been invaded? Has anyone dropped an atom bomb on us? Have we been impoverished or enslaved by foreigners? Is our business failing, and are our millionaires disappearing? Has the rate of profit gone down, is our machinery less cunning, or our natural resources destroyed by strangers? Is there any sign that the United States of America is victim, or can be victim of any foreign country? No! Then of what are we afraid, and why are we trying to guard the earth from Pacific or Atlantic and from the North to the South Pole, unless it be from ourselves?

Our rulers are afraid of an idea; tempted by a vision of power which this idea fights. The power they crave long misled and slaughtered the peoples of Europe and Asia, and now insidiously creeps into our own fever-mad heads; and that is Imperialism—world rule over the world. Once this was sought through black slavery: then it was made easy by yellow coolies: then by all 'lesser breeds without the law', who could furnish a 'white man's burden' and let him strut over the world, and lord it in Asia and Africa, and rule and rule without end, forever and forever. That was the vision of the nineteenth century. The fever of imperialism caught the United States as the nineteenth century died and we choked a few islands out of dying Spain. But these were but small change which whetted our appetite. With the first World War came the vision of an Imperial United States as successor of the empire on which the sun already sets. We rushed so madly at the spoils left by European empire, that we brought down our whole industrial system about our own ears.

It would seem that the memory of the great depression of the 'thirties would convince all thinking men that war is not the path to the millennium, and that what we need is reform of our own system of work and industrial organization, before we attempt to teach the world what to think or how to live.

But what the men of Big Business ignored was that the industrial system which they were seeking to re-install had already met a terrible

and costly reverse; that modifications of imperialism and monopoly capitalism had already been suggested and tried. Such efforts comprehended loosely by the name 'Socialism', were not invented by Russia nor first tried by Russia. On the contrary, Socialism is an English, French and German conception and was tried in Russia because that unhappy land was one of the last and worst victims of the capitalist system.

If to-morrow Russia disappeared from the face of the earth, the basic problem facing the modern world would remain: and that is, why is it, with the earth's abundance and our mastery of natural forces, and miraculous technique; with our commerce belting the earth, and goods and services pouring from our stores, factories, ships and warehouses—why is it that, nevertheless, most human beings are starving to death, dying of preventable disease and too ignorant to know what is the matter, while a small minority are so rich that they cannot spend their income?

That is the problem which faces the world, and Russia was not the first to pose it, nor will she be the last to ask and demand answer. The nineteenth century said that this situation was inevitable and must always remain because of the natural inferiority of most men; the twentieth century knows better. It says that there can be food enough for all; that clothes and shelter for all can be provided; that most disease is preventable and that the overwhelming mass of human beings can be educated; that intelligence, health and decent comfort are not only possible, but should be demanded, by all men; planned by all states; and made increasingly effective by all voters in each election.

But the powerful who to-day own the earth and the fullness thereof; who monopolize its industry and own its press and screen its news, have another answer. They order us to fight an Idea, to 'contain' and crush any dream of abolishing poverty, disease and ignorance; and to do this by organizing war, murder and destruction on any people who dare to try to plan plenty for all mankind. From the nineteenth century, they attempt to take over imperialism to bribe the workers and thinkers of the most powerful countries by high wage and privilege, in order to build a false and dishonest prosperity on the slavery and degradation, the low wage and disease, of Africa and Asia and the islands of the sea; and to pay the price for this, they demand that you, your sons and daughters, in endless stream, be murdered and crippled in endless wars.

This is why we are fighting or preparing to fight in Europe, Asia and Africa—not against an enemy, but against the Idea—against the rising demand of the working classes of the world for better wage, decent housing, regular employment, medical service and schools for all.

It does not answer this world-wide demand to say that we of America have these things in greater abundance than the rest of the world, if our prosperity is based on, or seeks to base itself on, the exploitation and degradation of the rest of mankind. Remember, it

is American money that owns more and more of South African mines worked by slave labour; it is American enterprise that fattens off Rhodesian copper; it is American investors that seek to dominate China, India, Korea and Burma; who are throttling the starved workers of the Near East.

Yet is it not clear that such a programme is sheer insanity? That no nation, however rich and smart, can conquer this world? Have not Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome, Britain and Germany taught us this? And also that no Idea based on truth and righteousness can ultimately be suppressed by force and murder?

I never thought I would live to see the day that free speech and freedom of opinion would be so throttled in the United States as it is to-day. To-day in this free country, no man can be sure of earning a living, of escaping slander and personal violence, or even of keeping out of jail unless publicly and repeatedly he proclaims:

- that he hates Russia.
- that he opposes Socialism and Communism.
- that he supports wholeheartedly the war in Korea.
- that he is ready to spend any amount for further war, anywhere or at any time.
- that he is ready to fight the Soviet Union, China and any other country, or all countries together.
- that he believes in the use of the atom bomb or any other weapon of mass destruction, and regards anyone opposed as a traitor.
- that he not only believes in and consents to all these things, but is willing to spy on his neighbours and denounce them if they do not believe as he does.

The mere statement of this creed shows its absolute insanity. What can be done to bring this nation to its senses? Most people answer: nothing; just sit still; bend to the storm; if necessary, lie and join the witch-hunt, swear to God that never, never did you ever sympathize with the Russian peasants' fight to be free; that you never in your life belonged to a liberal organization, or had a friend who did; and if so, you were deceived, deluded and a damned fool.

I want progress; I want education; I want social medicine; I want a living wage and old age security; I want employment for all and relief for the unemployed and sick; I want public works, public services and public improvements. I want freedom for my people. And because I know and you know that we cannot have these things, and at the same time fight, destroy and kill all around the world in order to make huge profit for big business; for that reason, I take my stand beside the millions in every nation and continent and cry *Peace—No More War!*

A new era of power, held and exercised by the working classes the world over, is dawning and while its eventual form is not yet clear, its progress cannot be held back by any power of man.

*Howard Fast*

## A TURNING POINT

WE have just come through a strange and trying period here in America—a period which indicates a most basic and consequential turning point in the tactics of the Truman government. I refer to the legal murder of the seven Negroes of Martinsville, Virginia. That these men were innocent goes without saying. We have more than abundant evidence of their innocence. But that can also be said of most of the Negroes who have been put to death in our South over the past 300 years. More important than the simple fact of their innocence is the nature of the struggle in which we engaged in their defence. The struggle was an international one as you know. Demonstrations were held in almost every country on the face of the earth. And here in America possibly as many as a million telegrams were sent to the White House and to the Governor of Virginia. Death vigils marched in freezing weather day and night in Richmond, in Washington, in Chicago, in New York City. My fellow writers and myself led one of these vigils that marched in front of the White House for six long, bitterly cold days.

The terrible thing to reflect on is that none of this action moved the Truman government one iota. The decision had been made to execute these Negroes as a warning to all other Negroes that the opposition of the Negro people to the war in Korea would not be tolerated. It was also a warning implicit to the white progressives in America—that the price for the struggle for peace from here on would be death. This is the first time that the Truman government has engaged in that time-tested Nazi practice, the symbolic killing of the innocent to intimidate the opposition. It is something we must think about. It is also something that decent people all over the earth must think about gravely and profoundly.

The present proceedings against Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois flow directly from this. In one breath the government, even before the bodies of the Martinsville Negroes are cold in their graves, announces the 20th of March as the date for the execution of the innocent Willie McGee, sets forth on a new trial of the six Trenton Negroes, and indicts Dr. Du Bois as a foreign agent.

Of all the acts of this unholy Truman-Acheson combine, the indictment of Dr. Du Bois is perhaps the most frightening and the most unexpected. It has been correctly characterized as a movement without precedent in all American history. Not only is Dr. Du Bois 83 years old and a man who has devoted all his long and rich life to the struggle for his people and for American democracy, but he is without question the dean of American scholarship. To put it briefly, he is a great and noble human being, and there are very few like him in the whole world. He is such a man as any country which retains any

of the elements of sanity and decency would treasure and revere; but the Truman government has reverence only for atomic death. Its action against Dr. Du Bois is tantamount to a death sentence since no one at his age could survive the rigours of a trial and five years' imprisonment.

But in another way the action should not surprise us. It is part of the pattern which these same people have imposed upon Korea, where a desert of rubble, ashes and blood defines democracy according to the Truman government.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

This issue will be the last of the old *Arena*. In the present situation a journal is required which will reach out to a far wider audience. A general reorganization will therefore take place, which will be so considerable that we feel it best for a new title, to be advertised in due time, to be taken. A new cultural journal issued monthly at 1s. Od. will take the place of the present *Arena*, which has made this new and more active development possible. Subscribers, unless notifying us to the contrary, will have their subscriptions transferred to the new monthly journal, the first number of which will appear in the autumn.